SpaceGamer FantasyGamer

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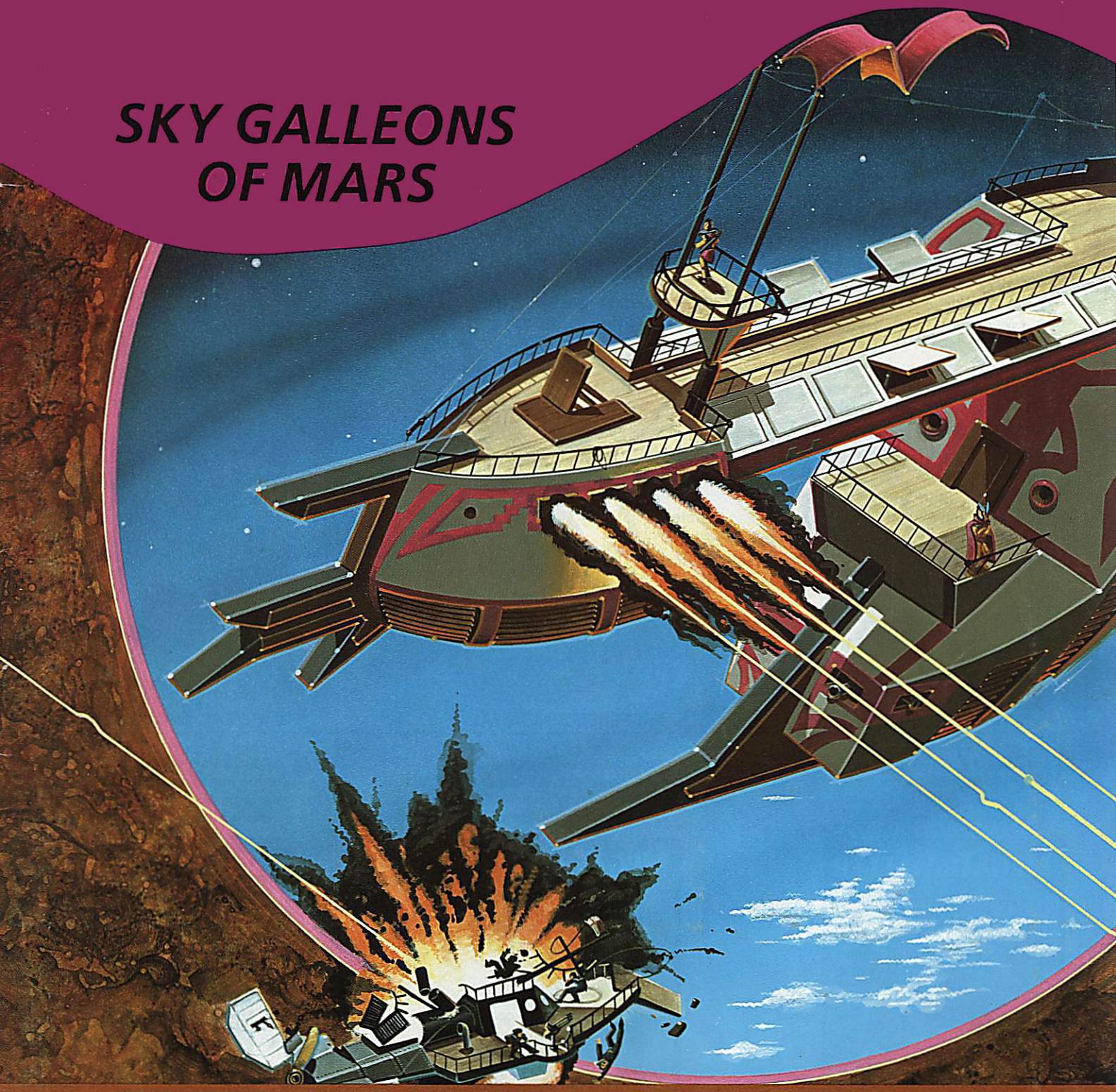
SKY GALLEONS OF MARS



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Living Steel, A Plaque In Westbrook (AD&D Scenario),
Star Wars , Role-Playing Mastery and much, much more!

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SpaceGamer FantasyGamer

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Jeff Albanese

Space Gamer Editor
Perrin Tong

Fantasy Gamer Editor
Jeff Albanese

Publisher
3W, Inc.

Art Director
Perrin Tong

Advertising
Jerry McKinnon

Circulation/Subscriptions
Ana Thomas

Shipping
Vivien Peach

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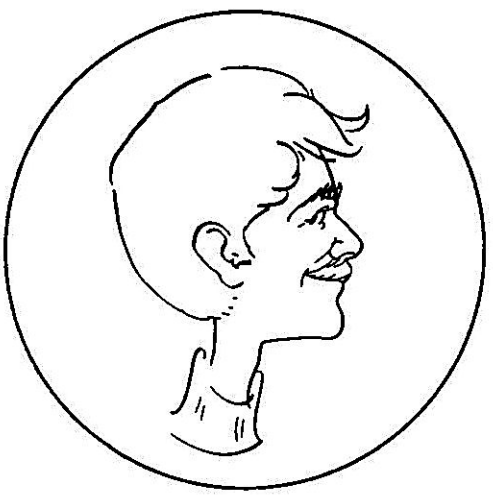
Changing Of The Guard

On June 1st of this year, ***Diverse Talents, Inc.***, the publishers of Space Gamer/Fantasy Gamer, Fire and Movement, and Battleplan magazines, as well as our fine STRATEGICON game conventions was bought by ***World Wide Wargames, Inc.*** The paperwork is in the hands of the lawyers and the State of California. They should approve the merger by October.

What does this mean to you, the loyal readers of SG/FG? ***World Wide Wargames, or 3W***, intends to produce role-playing modules, and we want you to submit your designs to us. With both the merger and the production of modules, SG/FG will be back on a regular schedule, and not cease to exist, as some would have had it do. Also, due to the delays and because of the uncertainty of SG/FG's future, the last issue was 3 months late.

Now, about the magazine? Starting with this issue, SG/FG's format will be changing, with fewer game reviews, and more scenarios and variants. The format change, slight as is, reflects the fact that role-players tend to buy the product as soon as it hits the shelves, making reviews less effective than with boardgamers, who tend to wait for reviews of games, in many cases, before they buy - the number one reason why Fire and Movement has done well these past twelve years. Also, since SG/FG has only 48 pages (Hopefully we will get to 64, if things go well), and comes out bi-monthly, we need the space for the backlog of material that is over-flowing our files. As for PBM and computer gaming, we will be covering them under either the Fantasy Gamer or Space Gamer sections of the magazine, depend-ing on the type of game.

The other change is that I am the editor of the whole shooting match, as well as the Fantasy Gamer section. The new Space Gamer section editor will be Perrin D.Tong, President of ***Future Combat Simulations***, the publisher of **STAR-BATTLES (Mainline)**, who also represent other game companies at our STRATEGICON conventions, of which I am in charge of as one of my many duties here at ***DTI***. Perrin will also be the Art Director for the magazine.



In this issue of SG/FG we cover ***GDW's* Sky Galleons Of Mars,** their **SPACE 1989** boardgame, which was by far the most talked about game at GENCON/ORIGINS. Speaking of GENCON/ORIGINS, over 8,000 gamers attended the show, and most of them enjoyed the show. Other articles in this issue include *A Plague In Westbrook*- an **AD&D** scenario, along with our regular features, and a new column on comic books.

We need feedback! Please tell us what you like, or don't like about the magazine. I can take the abuse - I am a high school history teacher - I know how to handle it. And speaking of feedback, Perrin and I have been trying to catch up on alot of unanswered mail. If you sent us any articles, letters, etc., and have not heard from either of us by now, please drop us a line.

Oops!

In Space Gamer/Fantasy Gamer #82, we ran an article called ***Mix & Match***, which also happened to appear in the July issue of the Dragon. Because of the uncertainty of the future of SG/FG, along with the lack of answering letters, the author, hearing nothing from us, submitted it to ***TSR, Inc.*** We didn't know about this until we had been contacted by the author, one Marcus Rowland of England, who called us and told us about what he done. I quickly got on the phone to Roger Moore, the editor of the Dragon, and explained what had happen. He understood, and the problem was handled. • SG/FG

Feedback #82

1. Murphy's Rules
2. Mix & Match
3. New Advantages & Disadvantages For **GURPS**
4. Cover Art
5. Issue Graphics
6. **Year of the Phoenix**
7. Fantasy Reviews
8. Gamer's Guide Classifieds
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13. Computers in the Morrow Project
14. **Super Power**
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16. **Return of Werdna**
17. Slaver's Hold
18. *SCANNER*
19. Dragonmeet Report

LETTERS

To the editor:

This is in response to Franklin Dombrosky's letter in SG/FG #81. Twelve years ago, while a freshman in high school, I played my first Avalon-Hill wargame. I remember being taken with the concept of "game as simulation", and I became an instant devotee of board wargaming. Later that year, my gaming friends and I discovered D&D, and we were taken by that game for similar reasons; instead of taking the role of military commanders, we were playing individual wizards and warriors. We divided our time between wargames and role-playing through our high school years. In the past several years, my gaming time has become entirely occupied with fantasy and SF gaming, because, as a devotee of fantasy and SF literature, I find it more personally rewarding.

However, I have not forgotten my gaming roots, and neither should you, Mr. Dombrosky. Science fiction/fantasy gaming is not "a leech that has attached itself to wargaming". Role-playing grew out of wargaming, and all my role-playing companions during those early years started out as wargamers, not vice versa. D&D started as a fantasy variant on medieval miniatures rules (about as wargamey as you get), and many of the original D&D campaigns began as miniature campaigns.

Whether or not you recognize fantasy gaming as a part of your hobby is your business. I myself have a respect and admiration for people who design and play historical simulations, even though I am no longer interested in them. I find the whole SCA scene rather silly (for me personally), but I tolerate and respect their presence at gaming conventions. The gaming community does not need your kind of intolerance, though. Indeed, if it is to survive, we should all work at expanding our respect for its differences.

Faithfully,
J. M. Caparula

Dear Sirs:

I was gald to get issue #81. That was in my opinion, an excellent issue. There was a little bit for everyone in it and the variety made the reading all that much better. I want to thank you for publishing my review of ORGE. It is appreciated. However, there is one correction - I reviewed the game on a Commodore 64, not an Apple 2.

In the magazine itself, I really enjoyed SCANNER. While not everything in it is interesting to me, I was glad to see and read about what various companies are doing and publishing.

The article, "So You Want To Build An ORGE. . . " is one of the best that SPACE GAMER has published in quite a while. I played with a design from your ORGE system myself for awhile, but I like Mr. Ladd's system better than anything I ever came up with. He did a through job and deserves a compliment on a job well done.

BLOOD BOWL was interesting. While I figured out what it was about, a short intro would have been helpful. "Manhunt" was another interesting adventure. It gave me several ideas for some of my own role-playing games. Another enjoyable was the "Villian". I enjoyed some of the ideas and can hardly wait to use them.

Of the reviews, I really enjoyed the "Siege and Fortress" review and the "GURPS Autoduel." Both were interesting and well done. However, the review on GURPS Fantasy I felt was a little harsh. I am not a dedicated GURPS player, but I do play the system now and then. I feel that comparing the world of Ytarria with the Harn system was not a fair comparison. The Harn world is a series of supplements, while Ytarria is about 20 to 25 pages of GURPS Fantasy, and is supposed to be a supplement that delt with magic. Also, the idea behind the history of Ytarria is a reasonable one.

To finish, I really do not care for the book reviews. I guess they are alright once in a while, but I wonder if they belong in a gaming magazine unless a game has been done about them.

Sincerely,
Tim Robinson

CONVENTION CALENDAR

Toledo Gaming Con VI
October 1-2

University Of Toledo Campus - Toledo, Ohio
For more info, send a SASE to:
Mind Games, 3001 N. Reynolds Road,
Toledo, Ohio 43615
Boardgames, Role-Playing, Miniatures,
Auction, Computers, Painting Contest,
Demos, Seminars, and dealer's.

Council Of Five Nations 14
October 7-9

Center City Convention Center - Schenectady, NY
Pre-Reg: $10 by Sept. 22nd, $15 At-The-Door
For more info, write to:
Council Of Five Nations, c/o
The Studio Of Bridge & Games,
1639 Eastern Parkway,
Schenectady, NY 12309
Boardgames, Role-Playing, Miniatures,
Auction, and a Costume Contest.

DRAGON CON '88
October 7-9

Pierremont Plaza Hotel - Atlanta, Georgia
Pre-Reg: $25, $30 At-The-Door, Plus $1.25 Per Event
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DRAGON CON, PO Box 47696
Atlanta, GA 30362
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WARCON'89
February 3-5, 1989

c/o MSC NOVA
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College Station, TX 77844

SCANNER

The following products have been, or are scheduled to be released soon:

Palladium Books

Monsters & Animals for the Palladium RPG and Beyond the Supernatural(Revised Edition)
RDF Accelerated Training Program for Robotech
The Magic of Palladium Books - A 16-page promotional tabloid for their product line
Mutants Down Under for Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
Invid Invasion for Robotech
Robotect II: THE SENTINELS for Robotech
TMNT & Other Strangeness (Revised edition - 6th Printing!)

MicroProse Software, Inc.

Pirates for the Apple IIgs(256K)

Game Designer's Workshop(GDW)

Kafer Sourcebook for 2300AD
Invasion for 2300AD(Module)
Bayern for 2300AD (Module)
Ground Vehicle Guide for 2300AD
Kidnapped for Twilight 2000 (Module)
The Last Submarine for Twilight 2000 (Module)
Rebellion Sourcebook for MegaTraveller
2300AD - Formerly Traveller 2300 - Revised Rules, additions, etc.
Sky Galleons Of Mars - Boardgame for SPACE 1889

Steve Jackson Games(SJG)

Conan: Beyond Thunder River for GURPS (Solo Adventure)
AADA Road Atlas and Surival Guide Number Five: The Midwest for Car Wars
GURPS Basic Set - Third Edition
GURPS Space Atlas
GURPS Japan
GURPS SUPERS - Super Heros for the GURPS system
Unnight - a GURPS Space adventure
The AADA Road Atlas And Surival Guide Number Six: The Free Oil States for Car Wars
GURPS High-Tech
Roleplayer #12
GURPS Time Travel
AADA Vehicle Guide 2 Counters
Uncle Albert's 2038 Catalog
GURPS Swashbucklers
Boat Wars - a Car Wars supplement
GURPS Ice Age
AUTODUEL QUARTERLY Volume 6, Issue 3
Also, *SJG* has acquired the game rights to George R. R. Martin's SF novels "Wild Cards"

Stargames

Star Empries - a science ficton card game

Strategic Simulations, Inc.(SSI)

Stellar Crusade for the IBM and the ATARI ST
Dragonlance for the IBM, AMIGA, ATARI ST, and the C-64/128 *
Pool Of Radiance - AD&D adventure for the IBM, Apple, and C-64/128 *
Dungeon Master's Assistant for the IBM, Apple, and the C-64/128 *
*Expected release for these games is in the September thru December time frame.

Iron Crown Enterprises(ICE)

Target Hero for Champions and Danger International (Module)
Enemies: The International File for Champions and Danger International
Leap Of The Lion - A Narnia solo game book
Tales From Deep Space for Space Master (Module)
Raiders Of Cardolan for Middle-Earth (Module)
Space Master -revised edition
Red Doom - Soviet organizations for Champions
Halls Of The Elven King for Middle Earth (Module)
Mouth Of Entwesh for Middle Earth (Module)
Space Master Combat Screen
Middle Earth Combat Screen
Minas Tirith for Middle Earth (Sourcebook)
Mirkwood for Middle Earth (Sourcebook)
Creature Of Middle Earth (Sourcebook)
Enemies: Villainy Unbound for Champions
A Spy In Isengard and Treason At Helm's Deep - Middle Earth Quest Books

TSR, Inc.

The Hunt For Red October boardgame
Buck Rogers - Battle for the 25th Century boardgame
Dragonlance boardgame
Commando - a Top Secret /S.I. Accessory
Covert Operations Casebook #2 - a Top Secret/S.I. Accessory
Bug Hunter - Sniper Companion #3 boardgame
Gamer's Guide Of The Marvel Universe #3 - for Marvel Superheros. Look for #4 in November.
The Collected Works Of Buck Rogers, Volume 2 - an art book of the first 60 years of Buck Rogers
Buck Rogers Graphic Novel #1 - written by Flint Dille, the grandson of John Dille, the creator of Buck Rogers
Revenge Of The Factoids - expansion set #1 for Gammarauders
The Art Of The Dungeons & Dragons Fantasy Game, Book II
The Five Shires, The Minrothad Guilds, and The Orcs Of Thar - D&D Gazetteers
Greyhawk Adventures - a hardbound sourcebook about the World of Greyhawk
AD&D Dungeon Master's Design Kit - a tool kit for DM's
Ruins Of Adventures and Curse Of The Azure Bonds - two AD&D modules converted from *SSI's* AD&D computer game
Mertwig's Maze - a AD&D boardgame designed by Tom Wham, designer of The Awful Green Things From Outer Space, so

SCANNER

expect another barrel of laughs from him!
Lords Of Darkness - a module anthologhy for AD&D
The Savage Frontier, Dreams Of The Red Wizards, and **City System** - AD&D Forgotten Realms campaign sets
Kara-Tur: The Eastern Realms - Oriental setting of the Forgotten Realms
Mad Monkey Vs The Dragon Claws - a module for Kara-Tur
Azure Bonds - a Forgotten Realms novel
Forgotten Realms 1989 Calendar
Knight Of The Living Dead - a Catacombs adventure book
Stormblade and **Weasel's Luck** - Dragonlance Saga Heros novels
The Dragonlance Saga, Book Three - graphic novel
Dragonlance Legends - all three novels in one book
The World Of Krynn - Dragonlance supermodule
Prince Of Thieves and **Night Of Chaos** - AD&D adventure gamebooks

FASA

Shrapnel - Battletech Art Anthology
Circus Imperium - Renegade Legion chariot racing
Warrior: Reposte (Novel)
PlasTech - plastic mechs for Battletech
Renegade's Honor (Novel)
The War Book, Part I - battles of the 4th Successor War
The Kell Hounds - scenario pack for Battletech/Force/Mech Warrior
Centurion Vehicle Recognition - technical readout book for Centurion
Star Trek: The Next Generation Officer's Manual
The Periphery - Battletech House book

R. Talsorian Games, Inc.

Cyberpunk - A new role-playing game set in the year of 2013
Night Of The Living Teenagers for Teenagers From Outer Space (Module)
Also, ***RTG*** is coming out with a new edition of **Teenagers From Outer Space**, which also will be released through the book/comic trade by ***TOR BOOKS.*** The scheduled release date is sometime in December.

Gamescience

How To Sell Your Game Design - A "how to" guide by Lou Zocchi. Very informative, and worth reading. It costs $6.00, plus $3.00 for postage. Get it from Gamescience, 1512 30th Avenue, Gulfport, Mississppi 39501.

New Infinities Productions, Inc.

Agaisnt The Horde - Volume I of the Legend Trilogy(novel)
Those Darn Dwarves - Book 1 of the **Iron Mountain Dwarves** series(novel)
Those Darn Dwarves-Again! - Book 2 of the **Iron Mountain Dwarves** series(novel)
Waylander - Volume II of the Legend Trilogy(novel)
The King Beyond The Gate - Volume III of the Legend Trilogy(novel)
Dance Of Demons - The fifth release in the GORD THE ROGUE book series(novel)
The Empire's Legacy - Book 1 of the Tales of the Concordat(novel)
Voyage Of The Planetslayer - Book 2 of the Tales of the Concordat(novel)
Revolt And Rebrith - Book 3 of the Tales of the Concordat(novel)

Sleuth Publications, Ltd.

Adventures By Gaslight - a game supplement for the Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective

C2 Simulations

New Order - PBM space game. Rulebook is $5.00.
Space 101 - Intorductory PBM space game. Rulebook is $3.50, and all turns are $3.50, with no extra charges.
For more information, contact ***C2 Simulations***, 16081 Sherlock Lane, Huntington Beach, CA 92649

Eternity Publishing, Inc.

Battle Armor - the story of a band of armored warriors fighting an alien invasion. Will be released as both a comic series and as a role-playing game.

Leading Edge

Living Steel - second edition (Book)
Trident RMBK for Living Steel (Module)

Games Workshop (US)

Blood Bowl-Astrogranite Version
Warhammer Mighty Fortress

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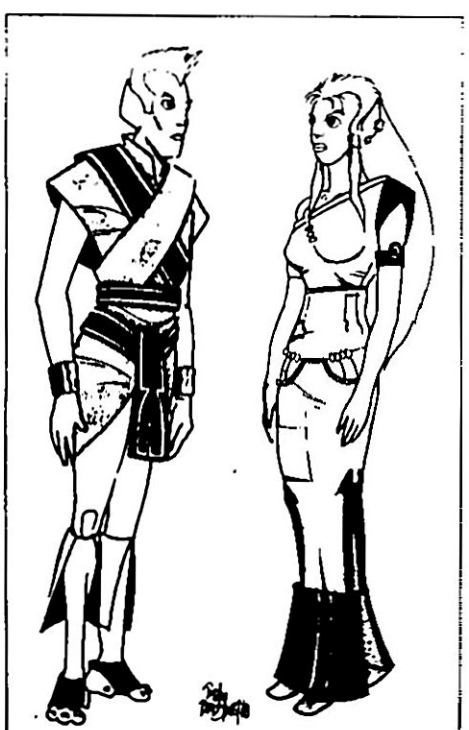
SKY GALLEONS of Mars

The Imperial Space Age is Here!

Title: Sky Galleons of Mars
Published by: *Game Designers' Workshop*
Designer: Frank Chadwick
Price: $24.00
Complexity: Low
Play Value: High
Reviewed by: G.E. Smith

"With liftwood for power, and enormous sails or air screws for propulsion, the Martian sky galleons have become an important part of Mars' worldwide civilization."



QUAINT MARTIAN COSTUMES

To explain even briefly **Sky Galleons of Mars (SGoM)**, this review must start with the upcoming premier of ***GDW***'s new role-playing system, **SPACE: 1889**, for which **SGoM** is the preview. The entire system intends to invoke the grand age of colonial expansion during the Victorian Era and then add on to it the fantastic visions of such authors as Jules Verne, A. Conan Doyle, Edgar Rice Burroughs, etc. The kicker is to power the "science" of this universe by using the outmoded theory of an all encompassing Ether (which during the 1800s' was considered to be the substance that filled all space, thus being the medium by which most forces were transmitted though the heavens). ***GDW*** has set itself the task of producing a rational, logical, and truly Victorian role-playing system, true to the science that propels it and the idea that enlivens the times.

The question is, does **Sky Galleons of Mars** have its own intrinsic play value, or are the players really going to need **SPACE: 1889** to get full value out of the game?

Visually, the product excels. From the action cover art to the 15 page, full-sized background booklet on the history of the era, ***GDW*** has obviously worked hard to create a "look" (and a polish to that look) that simultaneously recalls the time as well as paints the mystery of an exotic Mars. Add to this the beauty of the two maps (especially the city on the canal), the fifteen plastic ships and stands, the easily digestible rules book, etc. and one sees that ***GDW*** has given the buyer a lot of visual "bang for the bucks". You certainly don't feel short-changed at this point.

But it's steak, not sizzle, that sells games by word of mouth. Very satisfyingly, ***GDW*** has given us one of the finer cuts, not helper for the hamburger. When you assign the "A" squad of designers to a game, it shows.

The game itself can be sectioned into three areas for discussion:

1. The boardgame itself
2. The Shipyard
3. The Campaign system

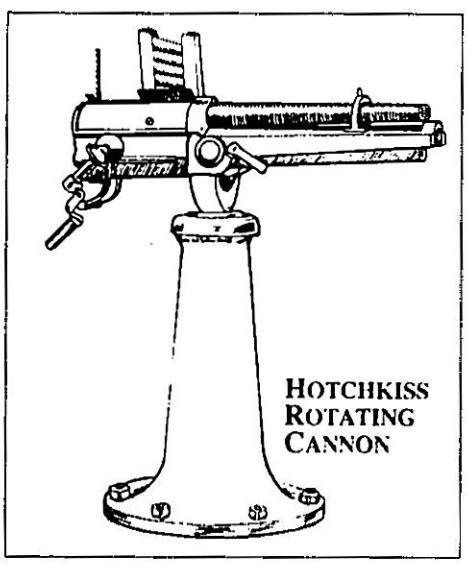
While each section alone is almost deceptively simple in its structure and feel, the combination of the three produces a sum greater than the surface whole.

The boardgame itself pits single ships or small fleets against one another, either as side versus side or as a demolition derby, last survivor winning. The concepts used do not break new ground. We are in familiar waters (or is that skies?) in that we receive schematic diagrams of ships with the major internal systems done in boxes (hull boxes, crew boxes, weapon boxes, etc.).

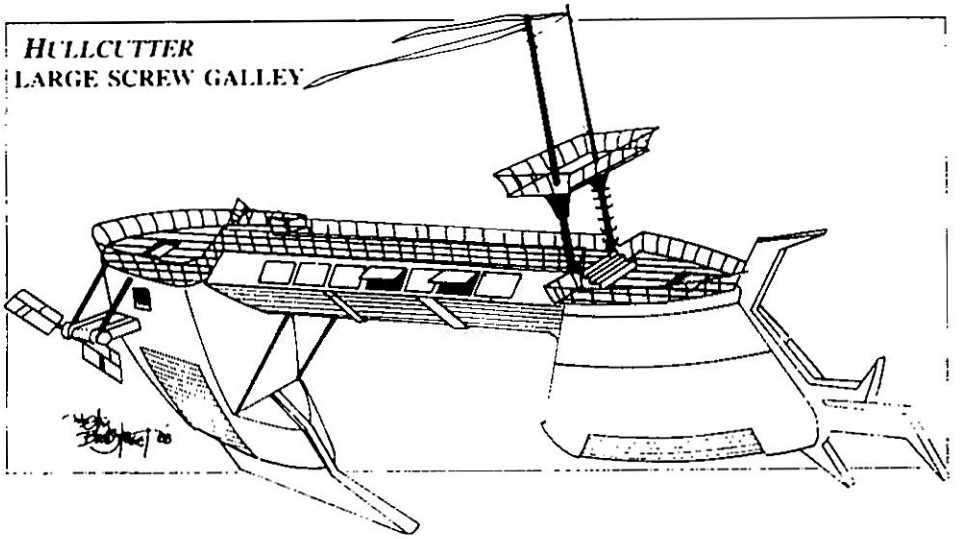
Each weapon type is rated to do "X" amount of damage at either Close or Long Range. The base chance at hitting at Close Range is 66% and at Long Range is 33%, though modifiers can greatly vary the percentages. A very nice touch is the four page (two sheet) combat results handout in the game. ***GDW*** thoughtfully placed all the modifiers, critical hit explanations and turn sequence notes into this handout, which speeds up play and cuts down on flipping through the rules looking for that one last + 1 you want.

Since these ships operate in the atmosphere, players may vary altitude between a maximum of five levels noted as: Very Low, Low, Medium, High, and Very High. It's easier to lose rather than gain height and there's a cost in movement points to do so. Turns are one minute, hexes are 200 yards and cost 1 MP to enter, the fastest ship has 6 MP and so ship speeds max out right at 40 mph. Wind driven ships of course will be at the mercy of the elements.

The meat of the system is the Initiative Phase (deciding who goes first), with the beginning person moving and then shooting (but fire may be held until a more opportune time), the next gamer then moves and shoots, play continuing until everybody finishes. Damage is applied as soon as it is taken and special Critical Hits can occur to really ruin a bad turn. These can range from a magazine explosion to jammed rudder/lifters and even Trim Damage, this last sending a flyer tumbling out of control, losing altitude (unless you make a saving throw!) until you reach Planet Level, which is a *hard* and final impact. All die rolls are done with one or two six-sided dice.



There are no surprises in the system for applying damage. Hull hits strip away the ability of a flyer to ascend altitude levels, forcing ships lower and lower. With crew hits though, players receive some latitude on where they wish to apply them. Even so, the choices aren't all that simple. For example, applying hits on the Deck Crew reduces the ability of the ship to put



SKY GALLEONS of Mars™

WEAPON CHARACTERISTICS: Martian Cannon

Weapon	*Pen*	*DV*	*ROF*	*Range*
Sweeper	P	—	2	0/1
Light	0	1	1	1/2
Rod Gun	3	1	(1)	3/6
Heavy	1	2	1	2/4
Rogue	2	3	(1)	3/6
Lob Gun	2	4	(1)	—/3

Weapon: The common weapon name. *Pen:* Penetration of the weapon. *DV:* Damage value of the weapon. *ROF:* Rate of fire of the weapon. *Range:* Maximum range (in hexes) the weapon may fire.

INFERNAL DEVICES

Device	*Pen*	*DV*	*To Hit*
Smutts Torpedo	1	12	As collision
Tether Mine (B)	0	6	6 (if released)
Tether Mine (M)	0	4	6 (if released)
Drogue Torpedo	0	10	6

Device: The common device name. *Pen:* Penetration of the device. *DV:* Damage value of the device. *To Hit:* The die roll on which the device hits the target. *B:* British. *M:* Martian.

WEAPON CHARACTERISTICS: Royal Navy Guns

Weapon	*Pen*	*DV*	*ROF*	*Range*
Maxim	—	P	6	1/2
Gardner	—	P	2/3	1/2
Nordenfelt	—	P	5	1/2
1-pdr HRC	0	1	3	2/4
3-pdr HRC	1	1	3	2/4
6-pdr HRC	1	1	3	3/6
4" short	2	2	1	3/6
4" long	3	2	1	4/8
5"	4	4	1	4/8
6"	5	6	1	5/10
8"	9	8	(1)	6/12
10"	10	10	(1)	7/14
12"	12	12	(1)	8/16
14"	14	14	(1)	9/18
16"	16	16	(1)	10/20

HRC: Hotchkiss Rotating Cannon. *Weapon:* The common weapon name. *Pen:* Penetration of the weapon. *DV:* Damage value of the weapon. *ROF:* Rate of fire of the weapon. *Range:* Maximum range (in hexes) the weapon may fire.

HIT LOCATION

Die Roll	*Location*
1	Hull
2	Hull
3	Crew
4	Crew
5	Gun
6	Critical

Die Roll: The roll of one six-sided die. *Location:* The location the hit occurred (see Hit Location Explanation).

CRITICAL HIT TABLE

Die Roll	*Result*
2	Magazine
3	Bridge
4	Fire/Boiler
5	Trim Damage
6	Rudder Jammed
7	Fire
8	Lifters Jammed
9	Screw/Mast
10	Magazine
11	Bridge
12	Fire/Boiler

Die Roll: The sum of the die roll results of two six-sided dice. *Result:* The result of the Critical Hit (see Critical Hit Explanation).

TO HIT

Range	*Die Roll*
Close:	3, 4, 5, 6
Long:	5, 6

To Hit Modifiers:

Different Altitude:	−1
Green Crew:	−1
Burning:	−1
Crack Crew:	+1
Shrapnel or Grape:	+1

Range: The type of range at which the attempt to hit is being made. *Die Roll:* The die roll of one six-sided die. *To Hit Modifiers:* Modifiers to the die roll.

SKY GALLEONS of Mars

out fires once they break out. Accumulate those hits on the Manuever Crew boxes instead and the ship slows down, unable to easily decline combat. A simple system, but it can bite the unwary player.

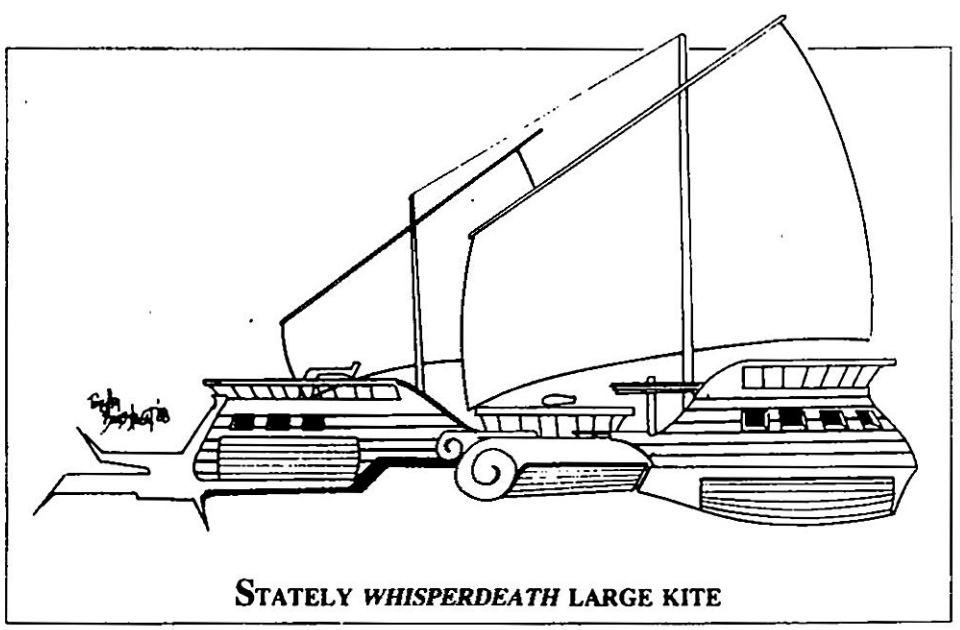
Naturally, there are rules for collisions, deliberate rammings, boarding parties, small arms fire and grappling. ***GDW*** feeds the rules to gamers a scenario or two at a time, making the learning curve a breeze. With one experienced player and 3 first timers, it took about 20 minutes to set up and start shooting (Scenario One), and the game overall lasted about 2 and a half hours. Two days later, with 2 experienced and 2 novices, the same lasted in total about 70 minutes.

The fun of the boardgame is of course using more "advanced" rules and the varied weapons types like: dumping Martian Liquid Fire on an enemy as you fly *over* them; or firing a salvo from a Hale Rocket Battery up at a target; of Tether mines that float *above* a ship and their cousin Drogue Torpedos that hang *down* from a ship. I could go one (Smutts Discharges anyone?) but you get the idea. Frank Chadwick wanted a wonderful variety of weapons (Martian Lob Guns, then) to add to the fun and by George he has succeeded in supplying them,

But how does one use all these marvelous devices, you ask? Well, now we get to the spice of this game, the section I call The Shipyards. Here, players are given the necessary formulas to *construct* a ship to their own specifications! No company trade secrets here to spoil the fun. You can take any one of the created ships and "tweak" it a bit, or madly (with infinite love, of course) build the nastiest infernal device to torment your opponents.

While I haven't tried it yet, I'd bet that with a PC and a simple spread sheet program a person could quickly computerize the process to more rapidly create that "perfect" ship on a budget each player is given for a particular game or campaign. Being a technology freak regarding ships, I can't thank Frank and ***GDW*** enough for this particular section. It's a streamlined and very neat piece of work that gives play a great boost. Incidentally, the next issue of **Challenge** magazine I'm told will devote an article to hints on ship design.

BARBARIC HIGH MARTIAN



STATELY *WHISPERDEATH* LARGE KITE

The Campaign system in **SGoM** allows players to do more with their ships than simply dogfight-to-the-death, it actually is almost yearningly written to encourage role-playing while providing the basics necessary to do more than simply fight duels. For example, "...if you survive by making a crash landing...you must make your way back to friendly territory. If you are already in friendly territory, this will be comparatively easy. If you are not, it may prove to be nearly impossible. Nothing, of course, is completely impossible." I mean, doesn't that start to awake the thoughts of all red-blooded game masters out there? Don't you wish you had **SPACE: 1889** in front of you right now to figure out how to

SKY GALLEONS of Mars

handle all this? Do you suppose ***GDW*** kinda knows that?

The Campaign Rules section (five pages) provides one with a plan for running a campaign with players as Red Captains (privateers), a starting budget, a map of the British sphere of influence and encounter tables players roll dice on, both for aerial as well as ground events. ***GDW*** suggests that players "win" by accumulating the most prize money, though you group might want to convert money from prizes into points and then assign points to good play, luck, most survived combats, etc. See hoe role-playing sorta creeps in here?

Not in the rules, but a point mentioned by Frank Chadwick at the GATEWAY game convention is that for campaigns, the length of time to build a ship is: 2 x Hull size = # of weeks.

Summing up, Frank Chadwick, Marc Miller, Loren Wiseman, Timothy Brown and brad r hay (yes, no capitals there) are to be congratulated for **Sky Galleons of Mars**. With the mixture of the advanced construction rules, The Campaign section, and the 16 page general background booklet on this "colonial" era, ***GDW*** has done about the best that they could do to make **SGoM** an easy-to-play stand alone game that gives its players full play value for their money. The question is, will **SPACE: 1889** be up to the same high standards? I have no doubts on that point and am anxiously awaiting January, 1989 for the premier. For now, enjoy.

● **SG/FG**

Accompanying Artwork Courtesy GDW

ORIGINS AWARDS 1987

The Academy of Adventure Gaming Arts and Design announced the winners of the Origins Awards for the best adventure products of 1987. The Origins awards are given for outstanding achievement in miniatures games, role-playing games, and adventure gaming magazines.

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Best Miniatures Rules, 1987
Harpoon, Game Designers' Workshop
Designer, Larry Bond

Best Role-Playing Rules, 1987
Star Wars, West End Games, Inc.
Designer, Greg Costikyan

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Tournament of Dreams, Pendragon, Chaosium, Inc.
Designers, Sam Shirley, Les Brooks & Greg Stafford

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Star Wars Sourcebook, Star Wars, West End Games, Inc.
Designers, Curtis Smith & Bill Slavicsek

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STAR WARS:

Keeping the Force with your Campaign

By David T. Okamura

It has been ten years since the adventures of a Tatoonie farmboy first captivated movie audiences around the world, but the realities of filming virtually dictate that the final chapter of George Lucas' nine-episode "Star Wars" saga won't be seen for at least another two decades. Fortunately, impatient fans can now blast off this backwater planet and join the Rebel Alliance in its heroic battle against the Empire. Thanks to *Star Wars: The Roleplaying Game*, gamers can experience firsthand the wonders and excitement of the mystical "galaxy far, far away. . . . "

West End Games has done an admirable job in transporting the magical essence of "Star Wars" into a roleplaying format. As a gamemaster, I've thoroughly enjoyed re-creating the action, danger, fun, and good humor so evident in Lucas' trilogy. Yet, I have often come across players who threaten to transform a thrilling "Star Wars" scenario into a low-budget remake of "The Invasion of the Hackenslash Montyhallers from the Deeindee System". (I'm sorry, but I don't do horror films.) After literally pounding one monster Minor Jedi's head into a stone wall to keep play balance, I have several suggestions on preserving the spirit of the game.

On Being A Rebel in Good Standing

Members of the Rebel Alliance come from all levels of Galactic society. Where else can you find a princess working together with a country kid, a smuggler of dubious reputation and a walking carpet? However, a sizable proportion will consist of various outcasts and criminals. Mercenaries, Outlaws, Pirates, Smugglers, and Bounty Hunters are all represented in *Star Wars: The Roleplaying Game*. The problem is that these social misfits are supposed to the the good guys. Portraying itself as the Forces of Liberation against an oppressive and corrupt Empire, the Rebel Alliance is highly concerned with its image. Players who commit heinous acts of wanton terrorism will find themselves note welcome at rebel bases. If these players persist in staging atrocities involving innocent lives, they must go it alone with a heavy bounty on their heads *placed by the rebels.* The Alliance firmly believes that resorting to such tactics will make the rebels no better than the evil Empire they seek to overthrow. Truly, the ends do not justify the means. George Lucas would never approve, and neither should the gamemaster.

Jedi and other characters with some knowledge of the Force must strictly abide by the Jedi Code or risk the Dark Side Points, but does that mean other players can run amok without suffering consequences so long as they don't use their Force Points? No - besides the loss of Alliance support these non-Force-trained characters should also be penalized. I advocate giving "Dark Side Pips" to these players; three "pips" equaling one Dark side Point. The number of pips issued depends on the severity of the character's actions, for instance: one pip for killing without good reason, two for causing major suffering among innocent parties, and a full Dark Side Point (even without using a Force Point) for annihilating an entire civilian residential area with a thermonuclear device. Life is precious, and the wasteful destruction of life *is* the Dark Side.

Dark Side Pips can be absolved if that character shows he has regretted his actions, or has performed some redeeming task. This need not be the same type of penance a Jedi must perform, but if someone has tree Dark Side Pips I highly suggest that he go through the entire procedure. In addition players who receive Dark Side Points should not be awarded the Force Points and Skill Points he/she would otherwise be entitled for that game session. Do these guidelines take all the fun out of being a Bounty Hunter or Outlaw? If your idea of fun is committing mass murder and mayhem across the Galaxy, I'd say yes. I would also recommend that you may find other game systems more satisfying than **Star Wars.** If you like the challenge of playing someone with a shady background, possibly at odds with other Rebels who disapprove of your lifestyle but willing to lend a hand for the team effort, I think you have the right idea and an interesting character conception. Remember, the most important thing about this game isn't "Star Wars", it's roleplaying.

If the Bounty Hunter can't turn in his Rebel friends (unless they wish to pull the same stunt Leia and Chewbacca tried in "Return of the Jedi"), the Pirate ordered to raid only Imperial shipping, and the Outlaw prevented from executing captured stormtroopers, what keeps these people loyal to the Alliance? The obvious answer is security. A Rebel base provides a safe place to rest without worrying too much of being shot as you sleep, as important consideration for fugitives. Outstanding acts of heroism may well be rewarded with a general pardon or certain small favors once the Republic is re-established. (A "Dirty Dozen" campaign involving condemned convicts under the command of a hard-bitten disciplinarian has interesting possibilities.) With the Empire ruthlessly eliminating many "undesirables". Rebels with criminal tendencies have a strong incentive to stay in line and assist the team.

Jedi Knights Unlimited?

I was always under the impression that the Jedi were virtually eliminated, and that the few survivors were too insignificant for the Emperor's attention. Such is not the case in many **Star Wars** campaigns, where "Super Skywalkers" are as thick as Sand Fleas on a Bantha. What is even more annoying about these Minor Jedi, Failed Jedi and Alien Students is the cavalier way they use their Force Skills and their willingness to reveal closely-guarded Jedi secrets to other PCs regardless of character background. (Remember what happened when Ben Kenobi tried to teach Darth Vader:) This recurring problem reflects both poor roleplaying and an incomplete knowledge of what it means to be trained in the Force.

The Jedi Knights were the guardians of the Old Republic, upholders of Truth and Justice in

those glorious years before the Empire. (Somehow the term "paladin" comes to mind; I don't know why . . .) Despite their positions of power and authority, the Jedi were always gentle and employed the minimum possible effort when handling a situation. Force skills were used sparingly and the famed light saber drawn only when absolutely necessary. Restraint was a Jedi's major virtue, as it was all too easy to overly-depend upon the Force and thus fall prey to the Dark Side.

Emperor Palpatine and Darth Vader reaffirm that the maxim "Power Corrupts" is especially true in regards to the Force. The stronger a Jedi becomes, the more he is tempted by the Dark Side to abuse his abilities. Therefore, experienced Jedi rarely exhibited their full potential. Usually they didn't need to. In the old days the mere presence of a Jedi was enough to preserve order.

There is another compelling reason why Jedi are loath to use their skills. Since a Jedi receives his power from the Force that surrounds all living beings, he leaves a distinct "signature" in the surrounding environment. This disturbance is magnified when a Force Skill is employed. Many Jedi felt that drastic interference of the natural ebb and flow of the Force would lead to disharmony and chaos throughout the universe. Judging from the bad vibes emitted by Palpatine, they could be right.

For players with Force Skills, the implications are far-reaching. If a single Jedi can be detected and identified by his "forceprint", a large group of Minor Jedi, Failed Jedi and Alien Students will definitely attract the notice of Darth Vader as he searches for Luke Skywalker. This is particularly true if Force Skills are regularly used, so rely more on your wits and save Force Skills for dire emergencies. It's more dramatic that way. To preserve game balance, no more than two Jedi-type characters should be in a single campaign. As the Jedi are nearly extinct, it strains credulity for more than two survivors to share the same planetary system, let alone the same Rebel base. If you want more Jedi PCs in your adventures, go ahead - but keep in mind that Someone *will* be watching.

A note concerning Force training: Taking on an apprentice is the most important challenge a Jedi faces. Certainly, Kenobi's catastrophic failure in tutoring Darth Vader should provide sufficient warning. A teacher's responsibility towards his student does not end when the pupil reaches the same level in Force Skills and cannot learn any more from his/her master. It is the teacher's duty to keep watch over a former apprentice's progress, and to step in when the Jedi-in-training goes astray. Likewise, a Jedi master who simply teaches technique without stressing the wisdom and self-control necessary to use Force Skills for the purposes of Good will be held accountable for producing a wild, undisciplined talent highly susceptible to the Dark Side. If a student is completely devoured by the Dark Side, his/her master must attempt to destroy the abomination he helped create. Jedi-type characters must be very discriminating when choosing an apprentice and should not casually

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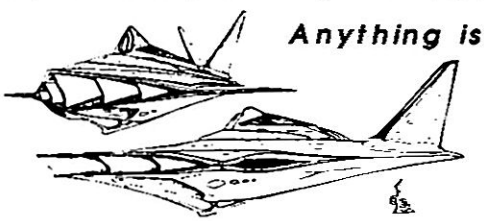

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bestow Force Skills to other PCs as trivial favors. While the Jedi Knights are looking for new members, they will *not* lower their admission standards.

A Jedi master may only instruct one student at a time. I once heard of an Alien Student who wanted to run Force Skill seminars in a rented auditorium. Not only does this idea smell of crass commercialism, it directly conflicts with the intensely personal attention that true Jedi training requires. (I suggested to the gamemaster that if the PC persisted in his folly, Darth Vader should appear as a "surprise guest lecturer" and demonstrate Mass Telepathic Kill. He did.) You *cannot* learn Force Skills by merely hanging around a Jedi! A PC must specifically tell the gamemaster when and for how long he/she plans to study with a Jedi teacher. More advanced lessons cannot be done between X-Wing patrols, but may require weeks of intense concentration and testing. Even with his considerable innate abilities, Luke Skywalker still had to endure a rigorous 24-hour training schedule at Yoda's retreat. Run a solo game session now and then so your "Obi-Wanna-be" gets a real taste of what Jedi training involves. As the Jedi PCs grow in the Force, increase the temptations of the Dark Side until a crisis point is reached. If the players pass this crucial test (like when Luke refused to kill Vader in "Return of the Jedi"), they should be rewarded with the knowledge that their training is now complete.

One other caveat: I earlier remarked on the similarity between Jedi Knights and **AD&D** paladins. This comparison should be taken seriously. Like their **Dungeons and Dragons** counterparts, Jedi will not condone evil actions committed by fellow characters. This does not mean that a Force-trained Rebel cannot associate with Smugglers, Outlaws and the like. (Ben Kenobi proved to be quit familiar with the low life of Mos Eisley.) However, a Jedi must never turn his back and ignore massacres performed by the party's Bounty Hunter, for instance. Unless the Jedi PC attempts to intercede he risks the same Dark Side Point penalty he would receive if he had committed the act himself. This keeps other non-Force-trained characters from indulging in atrocities, as nobody wants to push the Jedi PC into the Dark Side. Just imagine being in the same starship with a lightsaber-wielding Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde . . .

Twenty-seventh Level Barbarians in Rebel uniforms?

Frequently, I overhear some players brag about how their group walked into a Imperial base, killed two stormtrooper battalions, released all the prisoners, overloaded the fusion reactors and ambled off. In the meantime they also destroyed an entire TIE fighter squadron, captured four AT-ATs and beat up Darth Vader. If you think that story is sickening, you should glance at those character sheets.

The major appeal of "Stars Wars" was its depiction of a woefully-outnumbered Rebel Alliance using ingenuity, lick and sheer bravery against a vastly superior Empire. This atmosphere should be duplicated when playing the game version. As PCs, you will probably never single-handedly prevail in an encounter with Imperial forces. Most likely, you'll be running for your lives. While characters are expected to improve

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their skills, you're supposed to be roleplaying David, *not* Goliath.

I noticed that most of the obnoxious **Star Wars** players are the same ones who have triple-digit level, multi-class **AD&D** characters. **Dungeons and Dragons** encourages building a PC into a minor deity, but that is not the main objective in **Star Wars.** Equally exasperating are gamemasters who run **Star Wars** campaigns like **AD&D** modules, complete with a dungeon-like Imperial stronghold patrolled by wandering stormtroopers with kobold brains. There was even a "dragon's hoard" containing a lightsaber six-pack!

It is relatively easy to spot a **Star Wars** hackenslash Montyhaller character sheet, and the best way to prevent a campaign from degenerating into a space dungeon is to simply bar players from running outrageously gross Rebels. Obviously, there must be another GM who is a bit too liberal with his Skill Points, but your game sessions needn't suffer from someone else's poor gamemastering. Pay attention to the types of characters in your campaign. Power-hungry players frequently opt for the Bounty Hunter, with his armory of weapons. Other favorites are the Minor Jedi (due to his lightsaber), and the Smuggler with his stock light freighter. I put a firm limit on the number of Bounty Hunters in a single campaign, both for playability purposes and practical reasons. Two Bounty Hunters may team up for a single contract, but any more tends to diminish individual shares of the reward. Oh, if your Bounty Hunter insists on dragging his entire arms locker with him on every mission, feel free to invoke the likely consequences. Thermal detonators aren't immune to "accidental" activation, and the ten that are swinging from that Hunter's belt could catch on something.

Eventually, those Skill Points are going to add up. If your PC's start to act cocky, it may be time to remind them that the war is far from over. I don't mean you should make an all-out effort to kill them (though I have tried at times!), but perhaps something to take them down a notch. Personally, I've found that simply introducing an Ewok to the party does wonders in humbling the most self-assured Rebel. Everyday tasks suddenly become a challenge again, and Murphy's Law rules supreme. It is also a devious way of trimming down those lists of personal possessions while providing some comic relief.

Though it is pre-ordained that the PC's will never best Darth Vader in a lightsaber duel or kill Emperor Palpatine, there is enough glory to be had by all. If your group really wants to confront the Big Baddie, why not create a powerful Minor Dark Lord to be their own personal nemesis? A reappearing villain greatly contributes to the sense of continuity in a campaign. Then, if the PC's actually succeed in destorying Vader's underling (despite your own best efforts), it is time to bring the Dark Lord himself into the fray, and boy will he be mad! If anyone survives, you're being far too lenient.

Not the Same Place, Not the Same Thing

Why is it that half the Rebels I've met come from Tatooine? (Well, if you ever been on Tatooine during the summer. . .). Seriously, the sparcely-populated dustbowl of Tatooine is one innocuous planet among the tens of thousands that make up the Galactic Empire. When it comes to a PC's homeworld, let your imagination take you to places that even Lucas hasn't dreamed up yet. Perhaps certain features unique to that planet may effect character abilities. (If you were raised on Tatooine, for instance, I'd doubt that you had much experience in swimming.) Depending on where a character was born, a GM may award additional languages or greater proficiency in a skill. However, it must be justified by the planet's conception and the PC's background. The more detailed a character's history, the more interesting it is roleplay.

As for player characters, there is plenty of room for modification. The designers at **West End Games** created the character templates as a general guideline; they encourage you to run cautious Pilots and talkative Scouts, or anyone else that strikes your fancy. Why not use the same stats for the tongue-tied Engineer and play an absent-minded Professor, or a slightly-mad Scientist? If you don't want everyone to know that you're a Minor Jedi, keep the lightsaber out of sight and pose as a Pilot who has some problems getting used to an X-Wing. If you roleplay it right, the GM would probably welcome the difference.

The bane that kills more campaigns is repetition, and if you keep sending PC's back to the Death Star, more characters will die from boredom rather than by laserbolts. The **Star Wars** rulebook contains several interesting scenarios to vary the pace. I also occasionally borrow elements from other movies and games in "cross-over campaigns" that pit Rebels against Aliens, Lovecraftian Horrors, and Ogre Mk V's (the Last one was mistaken for a Jawa sandcrawler) . While I dislike monster-bashing a'la **D&D,** I actually had a party land on the planet Deeindee, where magic-users employ (but do not completely understand) the Force in their spells. However, I will not introduce giant transformable robots! Once the players get the idea that the GM is not being serious, it is impossible to stop the silliness that inevitably results. If you wish to run a "cross-over" campaign, make sure that your "guest star" is compatible with the space opera millieu of **Star Wars.** Having the Rebels assist Colonial Viper pilots may be interesting, but sending the U.S.S. Enterprise against Vader's Executor is highly illogical.

Finally, I recommend that both players and GM's take to heart the suggestions in the Star Wars rulebook adventure section. There are many useful hints on how to maintain a manageable and entertaining campaign. I'd like to thank those brave Rebels stationed at the Santa Fe Springs Gamers Association, where I received many comments from players in my campaigns as well as from those who helped play-test **Star Wars** before its release. Special appreciation goes to Carol Turrietta, whose Ewok always kept the party on its toes. (By the way, Pocko, that Bounty Hunter is no longer after your hide.) May the Force be with you, and I'll see everyone at the big victory celebration on Endor! • SG/FG

A Question of Leverage

by Greg Porter

So what if your character can bench press 17 tons? Can you twirl it like a baton or use it like a Louisville Slugger on villians? Maybe, maybe not. If being strong isn't quite enough, you can always throw in a few brain cells to make it better. You low-powered types should listen up, too.

You know exactly how much your character can lift. It says it right there on page X of the rules. And if you strain a bit, you can knock this up a bit more. This is a minor point, but when every last thing in your favor counts (i.e. when you are getting slagged), it can be important. The information here can be adapted to most systems, but since I am a **Champions** fan, all the numbers here will be for the **Hero System**. For other systems, remember that each 5 points of strength in a **Hero System** game is a doubling of lifting capacity (**DC Heros** fan take note).

Leverage

Using various types of leverage will allow you to move objects heavier than that you could otherwise lift. Take lifting a car by the back bumper. The mass of the car essentially acts from the middle, while you're grabbing it at the end and pivoting it about the other tire. This is about a 2:1 mechanical advantage. In **Champions**, this would mean you could get the effect of an extra 5 points of strength without spending the endurance for it. A character with a strength of 15 would count as a 20. If they pushed it by 10 points, they could get a 30 and just be able to get the back end off the ground. Each doubling of mechanical advantage will add another 5 points of effective strength. Advantage compared to extra strength for **Champions** is below.

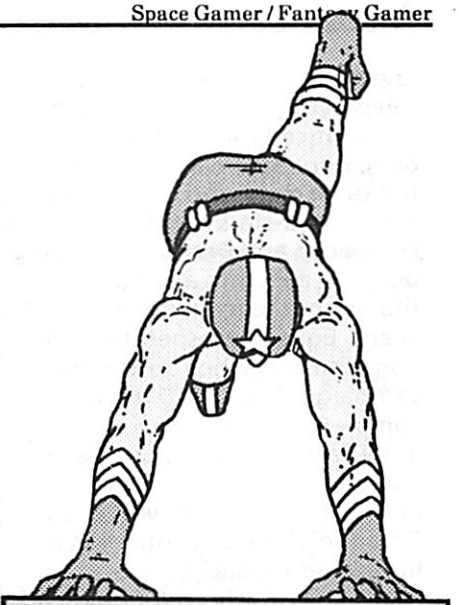
Mechanical Advantage	Extra Strength
1:1	0
2:1	5
3:1	8
4:1	10
6:1	13
8:1	15
12:1	18
16:1	20

These numbers are for homogeneous objects. You might want to add or subtract 2 or 3 if the object is unbalanced, like a car with a heavy engine in one end.

In most cases, using an object for leverage will damage it just like an attack would. A normal person would have trouble bending a rifle (DEF 3) with their bare hands. But stick it in a vise and lean on it, and you will quickly have a bent piece of metal. The same could be said of a super-strong character using a I-beam.

Pushing things

It is usually easier to push something along the ground than to lift it. This depends on the object being pushed and what it is resting on. The effect may increase or decrease the effective strength of the character relative to the object. To get the object, judge the characteristics of what is being pushed and what it is pushed over. The result is the bonus or penalty to strength the character will get.



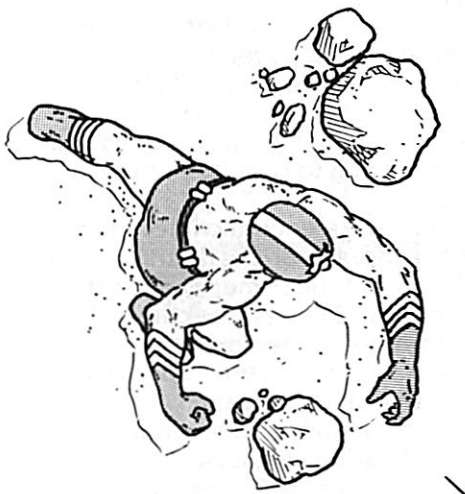
Friction				
Very High	High	Medium	Low	Very Low
-5	0	+5	+10	+20

Examples of various types of contacts help to illustrate this.

- Very High - rubber on asphalt
- High - steel on asphalt; steel on rough cement
- Medium - steel on steel; steel on smooth cement
- Low - ice on ice; greased, smooth surfaces
- Very Low - wheels on smooth surface; ball bearings

A normal person pushing a car could have an effective STR of 30 for purposes of moving it. However, if the wheels were locked, their STR would only be a 5. Locked wheels on ice would be normal, but the character might be at a disadvantage if they were also on ice. Pushing things up a hill would count as a surface a level or two worse, and downhill would make it a level or two better. Very low friction contacts may allow the object to move under its own weight downhill. It will take less STR to keep an object moving than it took to get it started. In most cases this will be 3 points less. Usually, the velocity an object can

be pushed is equal to the jump distance for the extra strength, with a minimum of 1" per phase. Example: Joe, with a STR of 15, is pushing a car on a level surface. He gets an effective STR of 35, which is 5 more than he would need to move the car. This would give a jump of 1", so he could push the car 1" per phase.

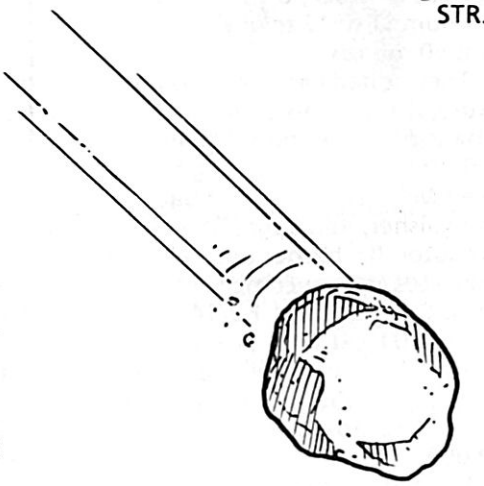


Picking Things Up

Leverage may work against you when picking things up. Being able to grab a car and hold it over your head is one thing, but can you hold it at arm's length, or use it as a club? Essentially, for each hex of the object's length, subtract 5 from the STR you are using to wield the object. A character with a STR of 30 could pick up a small car, but they would need a STR of 40 to hold it at arm's length or swing it as a club (40-10 = 30). Also, holding an object in a way it wasn't meant to be used could damage it. A general guide is to use the damage modifier for vehicle mass in **Champions II**. This modifier will be treated as an attack on the object if wielded improperly. Example: Brickulus, with a STR of 60, can easily pick up a GMC twin axle truck by the back end. However, the truck is none to happy with it. Its damage modifier is + 6d6 and its back DEF is 4. So, the truck takes 2 BODY just from being picked up wrong (creak, groan). This usually isn't too important, but it could be disconcerting to pick up a Greyhound bus and have it break in half. Swinging objects like a club will also do damage unless the character is careful, even if it doesn't connect.

Smashing Things

Longer objects will do more damage when swung, as well as being easier to hit with because of their size. Due to the increased velocity of the object at the end, a multi-hex object will get + 1d6 of damage per hex of length. The object used also takes this extra damage. Example: Brickulus swings the truck in the previous example at an opponent 3 hexes away. The truck has already taken 4 BODY, 2 from picking it up, and 2 from swinging it. Normally he would do 12d6 of damage with his STR, but the extra length of the truck gives him an extra 3d6. The truck will be totaled by the attack, but there are always others. You can't do more extra damage than the base damage for STR.

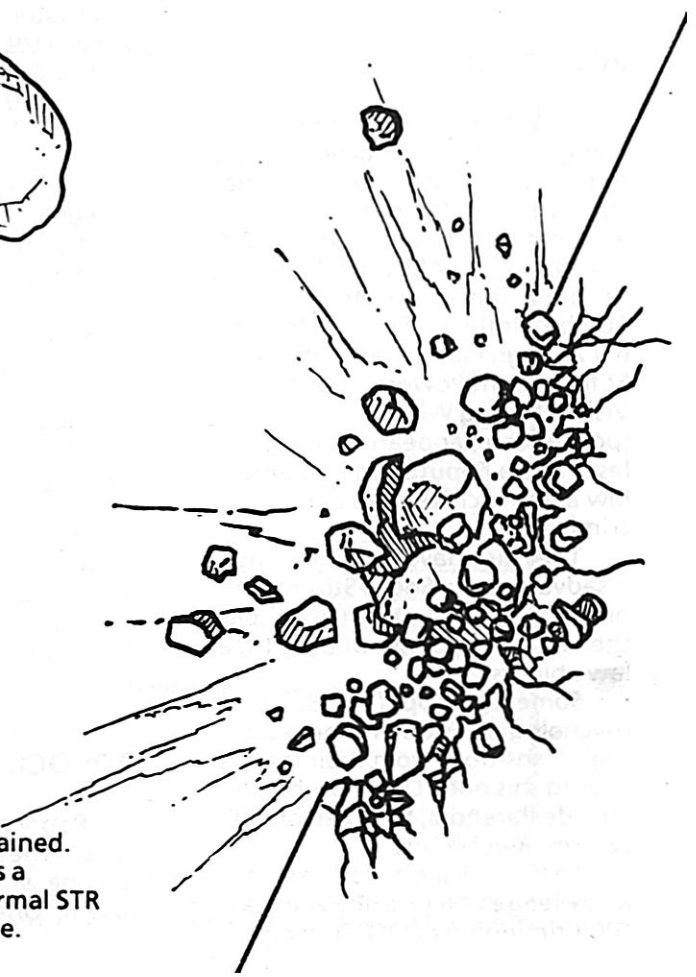


Throwing Things

If a character does a wind-up with an object, much like a hammer toss, a bit of extra range may be gained. Treat a throw of this type as a Haymmer, and use 1 1/2 normal STR to get the throwing distance.

Inertia

In low-gravity situations, characters may be able to move substantially more than their STR would normally allow. Lower gravity will act as leverage for purposes of exerting STR. Half gravity would give you the effect of 2:1 leverage, etc. Zero-G allows the character to move just about anything, albeit rather slowly. Unfortunately, the object still has a lot of inertia. A character manuevering an object in low or null-G conditions will take a -1 to DEX for each point of STR they would be lacking if gravity was normal. Example: Joe Normal is man-handling a small car around in zero-G. This takes 20 STR more than he has, were he to try and lift the object in normal gravity. Therefore, his effective DEX is a -10 (10-20) when trying to do anything with the object. Don't bite off more than you chew. • SG/FG



ROBOCOPS

A New Generation of Law Enforcement for GURPS Autoduel

By Michael DeWolfe

A very popular 1987 movie brought about the idea of cyborg police. The same idea seems tailor-made for the world of **GURPS Autoduel**.

Cops in the year 2030 die everyday. Chasing outlaws and murderers, they can come to their ends quite easily. Afterwards, however, they can be used in an elite corps: The Robocops. Their bodies and their razor sharp minds, are augmented with cybernetics. No longer human and not yet machine, they are every outlaw's worst nightmare.

ROBOSTATS

Robocops are exceptional, being 325-point characters and able to take care of any criminal menace they see fit. A Robocop automatically has: + 6 ST, + 5 DX, + 4 IQ, + 1 HT, Absolute Direction, Absolute Timing, Alertness (+ 3), Combat Reflexes, Eidetic Memory (lvl 2), High Pain Threshold, Law Enforcement Powers, Peripheral Vision, Strong Will (lvl 3), a Patron (police force, appearing on a 6 or less), and a Reputation (+ 5 among law abiding citizens, -5 among criminals.

They also have the following disadvantages: Social Stigma (as property), Eunch, Duty (to uphold the law), and a Sense of Duty (to all law abiders).

Some Robocops (1-in-3) have psychological problems because of their transitions from their last life over to this one. Likely problems include Paranoia, Split Personality, Sadism, Berserk, etc.

Their skills are as follows: Area Knowledge at IQ + 2, Brawling at DX, Criminology at IQ, Driving (Cars) at DX-1, fast Draw at DX, Gun/TL 7 (Pistol) at DX + 3, Gun/TL 7 (Rifle) at DX + 2, Gunner/TL 7 (Machine Guns) at DX + 1, Law at IQ + 2, Mechanic (Robocops)/TL 8 at IQ + 1, Motorcycle at DX, Streetwise at IQ + 1 and Tactics at IQ + 1.

Their robotic bodies have the following statistics: They act as armor (PD 3, DR 7), covering almost all of the body. They reduce Move by 2. They weight 475 lbs. and bring the Robocop's height to 6'5".

They have the ability to record what they see and hear for later recall, admissible in court.

Their guns act like AK-13 rifles but have no stock, thus requiring a minimum ST of 12 to use. Each clip holds 60 rounds.

Their squad cars are as follows: Luxury, X-Hvy chassis, Hvy suspension, Super power plant, 4 solid tires, driver, 3 passengers. 2 linked MG's in front, SD in back, Fire Extinguisher, Roll Cage, Targeting Computer, Recharger and Feeding Apparatus. Honeycomb Custom Armor Composition: F 2/14, L 1/10, R 1/10, T 1/10, U 1/10. Accel 10, Top Speed 100, Driving skill modifier: + 2, weight: 5950 lbs. (650 left for crew and cargo). Value: approx. $19,000.

Robocops have one definite weakness. For six hours of every 72, they must park and shut themselves off while they recharge their biological metabolism and electrical power supply. During this time, they are defenseless, so they choose a "safe" place like a police station parking lot or a secluded spot. If they don't do this, they lose energy rapidly and temporarily with it one point of ST, DX, and IQ per hour. When any of these reach zero, they shut down, requiring technicians from the police force to restart them.

ROBOCOPS IN ADVENTURES

Robocops are no-nonsense types. They perform their duty, aid anyone who needs help and then leaves. One won't become friends with anyone or play favorites. They remember people who they've met before but won't treat them any better or any worse.

Robocops travel alone, only infrequently touching base with the local police department. They search out their patrol vicinity, looking for criminal acitivities and responding to calls from the police station.

At the scenes of crimes they have three priorities (in this order): 1) prevent the crime; 2) protect the innocent; 3) arrest the criminal(s). If a criminal is threatening an innocent person, the Robocop will not hesitate killing the criminal.

In combat, a Robocop will assess the situation very well. If a target is at -5 or worse to hit, he won't fire. Robocops commit actions that seem very daring because they are sure of their success. For instance, if a criminal uses an innocent to shield themselves, they'll be sorely disappointed with the results. If there are multiple targets, there are two considerations (1. danger and 2. range) that lets it choose which will go for first.

Robocops also patrol the roads for illegal autodueling. When encountered, they first issue a warning to the duellers. If the warning isn't heeded, they destroy both vehicles.

In places where there are speed limits, it's not uncommon for them to give chase and issue a ticket when the party is stopped. If the party fires at a pursuing Robocop, they'll wish they hadn't.

CAMPAIGN IDEAS

If a group of player characters are behaving exceptionally lawless, they may come up against a Robocop. To survive, they must destroy him or surrender.

If the characters are instead in the clutches of a gang of outlaws and there seems to be no hope at all, a Robocop may arrive on the scene to save them.

SAMPLE ROBOCOP

GURPS® CHARACTER SHEET

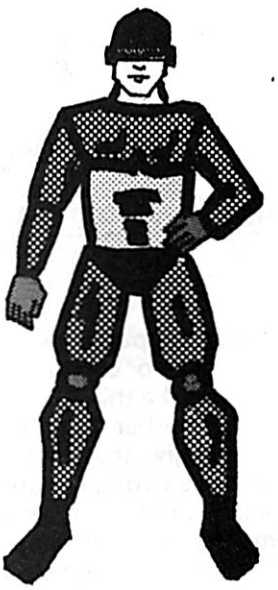
Name ROBOCOP 1265 Player

Appearance

Background

Date Created | Sequence | Unspent Points | Point Total

Pt. Cost		
	ST 16	FATIGUE
	DX 15	BASIC DAMAGE Thrust: Swing:
	IQ 14	
	HT 11	HITS TAKEN
	Mvmt	BASIC SPEED 6.5 (HT+DX)/4 — MOVE 4 Basic − Enc.



ENCUMBRANCE

None (0) = 2×ST
Light (1) = 4×ST
Med (2) = 6×ST
Hvy (3) = 12×ST
X-hvy (4) = 20×ST

PASSIVE DEFENSE

Armor: 3
Shield:
TOTAL 3

REACTION +/-

ACTIVE DEFENSES

DODGE	PARRY	BLOCK
4	10	
= Move	Weapon/2	Shield/3

DAMAGE RESISTANCE

Armor : 7
TOTAL 7

WEAPONS AND POSSESSIONS

Item	Damage Type	Amt.	Skill Level	$	Wt.
Pistol	Crush	2+3			
Punch	Crush	1+2			

Totals: $ Lbs.

WEAPON RANGES

Weapon	PB	INC	½ DMG	MAX

SKILLS

	Pt. Cost	Level
Area Knowledge (Patrolled Area)		16
Brawling		15
Criminology		14
Driving (Cars)		16
Fast Draw (Pistol)		15
Gun / TL 7 (Pistol)		18
Gun / TL 7 (Rifle)		17
Gunnery / TL 7 (Machine Gun)		16
Law		16
Mechanic / TL 7 (Cars)		15
Mechanic / TL 8 (Robocops)		15
Motorcycle		15
Streetwise		15
Tactics		15

ADVANTAGES, DISADVANTAGES, QUIRKS

Pt. Cost	
	Absolute Direction
	Absolute Timing
	Alertness (+3)
	Combat Reflexes
	Eidetic Memory (lvl 2)
	High Pain Threshold
	Law Enforcement Powers (10 pts)
	Peripheral Vision
	Strong Will (lvl 3)
	Patron (Police Dept. on 6 or less)
	Reputation (+5/-5)
	Social Stigma (-4)
	Eunuch
	Duty (to uphold law)
	Sense of Duty (to all law abiders)

SUMMARY

	Point Total
Attributes	
Advantages	
Disadvantages	
Quirks	
Skills	
TOTAL	

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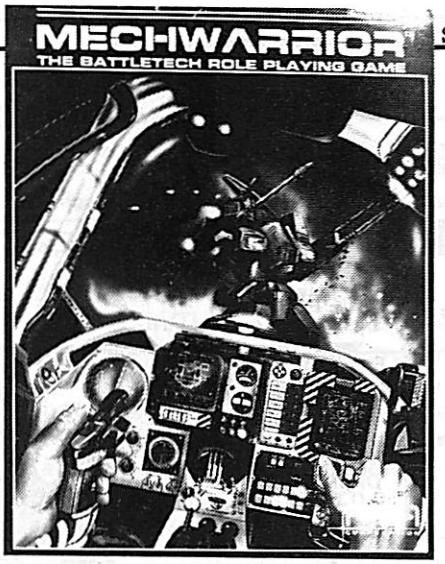
NEW INBORN ABILITIES FOR MECHWARRIOR

By Barry Osser



I have found that there is a need for a greater selection of Inborn Abilities in Mechwarrior so that you do not have carbon copy characters. I started running into this problem in my campaign and decided to do something about. Here is a list of those abilities that worked well in my campaign and they neither over-ba-lanced nor detracted from the game in any way. There is some latitude left to the referee in these abilities so that individual referees can determine what works best for their campaign.

As in Mechwarrior, some of these inborn Abilities are positive and cost CP, while others are negative and earn the player character a CP credit.

Personal Feud (-5 CP)

The character has been in a long-standing feud with a rival Mech Warrior. This means that the character will have a strong negative reaction to any encounter with this Mech Warrior. The gamemaster and player should create details about this feud as a plot device for further adventure opportunities. This is a very specific ability involving the Mech Warrior in a one-on-one feud. The character will feel strongly about dealing with this particular Mech Warrior alone, even if he is outclassed by his rival.

Lance Feud (-10 CP)

The character's lance or company has been in a longstanding feud with a rival lance or company. All member of the lance or company must agree to take this ability. Similar to other feuds, this feud will give the Mech Warriors a strong negative reaction to the rival lance or company. The gamesmaster and player(s) should create details about this feud as a plot for further adventure opportunities.

Dispossessed Family (-20 CP)

This is a very damaging ability. The character's family had been dispossessed of sometime in its history. Because of this, the character, even with a 'Mech, can never hold a title higher than Knight. In addition, the character can never be a House Regular allowing him only to be a Mercenary. Progeny of this character will have to change their names in order to lose this dispossession, otherwise this ability will be applied to the progeny automatically (for no CP). Elder relatives of the character will always be considered to be dispossessed. The gamemaster and player will need to flesh out the history of the dispossession.

This ability may only be purchased once.

Passion (-5 CP)

This ability is more to flesh out of character than anything else. The character has a passion for some non-'Mech related thing. Non-'Mech related means that the passion could not be dealing with the 'Mech directly; i.e. "I must use my 'Mech in a fight", or "I must attack whoever hurts my 'Mech", or "I must get my 'Mech repaired every time it is damaged", are not allowed. These are necessities, not passions. This passion will be strong enough that to follow it will require the character to ignore all other events to accomplish it. This will often place disciplinary action upon the character as the passion will force the character to ignore combat orders and the like.

Only one passion may be purchased.

Example: The Mole has a passion for crickets and will always try to catch as many as he can and put them inside his 'Mech cockpit. The Mole may actually quit a battle if he sees a field that will give up a lot of crickets, thus, jeopardizing his Lance's success. In time, as the crickets become accustomed to the sounds inside the 'Mech, they will begin chirping and hinder his audio reception.

Raised HTK (variable)

A character may buy up his multiplier for total Hits-To-Kill for CPs. The normal multiplier is 10 and it may be increased at a cost of 5 CPs per point up to a maximum of 14. This would mean that a x11 multiplier costs 5 CP, a x12 multiplier costs 10 CP, a x13 multiplier costs 15 CP, and a x14 multiplier costs 20 CP. Raised HTK does not change the Mech Warrior's consciousness rolls but affects his overall resistance to body damage when he is in combat outside his 'Mech.

Lowered HTK (variable)

A Character may buy down his multiplier for total Hits-To-Kill for CPs. The normal multiplier is 10 and it may be bought down as low as 4 for the following CPs. Lowered HTK does not change the Mech Warrior's consciousness rolls but affects him in combat situations outside his 'mech.

Lowered multiplier	CP
x9 multiplier	-5
x8 multiplier	-7
x7 multiplier	-10
x6 multiplier	-14
x5 multiplier	-19
x4 Multiplier	-25

Natural Ineptitude (-5CP)

The character has a large learning block in the training of one of the 25 training skill areas (roll randomly with a d20 + d6-1 to determine which). All training costs in this field are double the normal CP cost. This skill may be purchased more than once but it should be noted that this seriously hinders the character as Natural Aptitude does nothing if rolled on the same skill area. Natural ineptitude (the defect) takes presidence over the advantage of Natural Aptitude. • SG/FG

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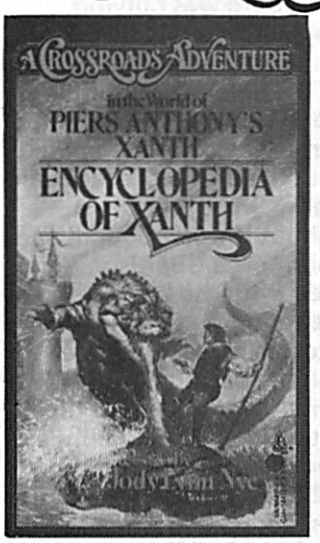

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Rhand's Apocalypse, Day 42: The Destruction of the Imperial Guard

by David Mckenzie
and
Barry Nakazono

On the first day of the Spectral bombardment of Rhand, chaos descended. Throughout the world, the cities lay in ruins, and madmen made war over the shattered fragments of civilization.

One of the few groups that survived the disaster intact was the Imperial military. They had been sent to Rhand in preparation for war with the rogue RMBK division of the Trident Corporation, and they adapted quickly to the crisis. Ordered to guarantee that Rhand remained a part of the Imperium, they were intent on doing so; regardless of the cost in lives, and the Spectral invasion.

Forty-one days after the invasion, the leaders of the entire Imperium united to plan their campaign. On the next morning, they were attacked and destroyed. Only a handful of Imperials escaped; the stories they told of the battle were confused and incomplete. Some said they had been attacked by soldiers in power armor, others claimed it was the Spectrals, a few claimed they saw unarmored fanatics.

And some claimed that the Imperium's power and leadership had been destroyed by creatures out of legend, by members of a race which had ruled its own interstellar empire for millenia, before disappearing overnight . . . the Dragoncrests.

The sentry watched the sun rise on the Imperial Guard landing zone. Looking around, he saw the rest of the night watch at their posts, the moisture on their power armor glistening in the early light. The barracks, the command bunker, and the grav vehicle pool were all silent, awaiting the beginning of the day.

It had been a quite week, but the sentry knew that today there would be a change. Late last night the command elements of all Imperial forces on Rhand had flown in, and this morning they would begin their conference. The decisions of the commanders were very important to the sentry; he was more than just a Guardsman. His actual purpose was to pass intelligence to his true leader. When the Guard went on the attack, the Colonel would need specific information.

The sentry stood at the edge of the large clearing that served as the landing zone. For miles in all directions there was only the forest that covered eastern Elandia. Uninhabited, and scanned constantly by the radar of the 7th Imperial Guard Strike Battalion.

The 7th consisted of more than 150 elite power armor soldiers, and was the most powerful military unit on the planet. They had come to Rhand to defeat Trident's renegade RMBK division, but their plans had been radically altered by the sudden attack from space. And so the military leaders of the Imperium met at the landing zone of the Guard, to take the offensive in a world of chaos.

The sentry's reverie was shattered as a series of explosions devastated the grav vehicle pool. Most of the powerful gunships, APC's, and carriers which gave the Guard its mobility were destroyed in a few moments. Swift, unarmored figures raced from the pool toward the barracks, firing lase weapons as they ran.

The sentry had no time to think about how he and the rest of the watch had been bypassed or about who had sabotaged the vehicles; he too was under fire. There were power armor troops out in the forest, their camouflaged forms barely visible. Rocket rifle rounds poured in from all points of the compass. None of the rounds hit, however; like warning shots, they were directed into the ground around the sentries' feet, or at clearings within the base. As the other members of the Guard began to return fire, the sentry ran for cover. He was here to gather intelligence about the Guard, and that purpose would not be served by his participation in a firefight. Moreover, he had no doubt that the Guard would quickly repel the attack; no force on the planet could withstand the Guard.

A second volley came in from the forest, and the Guard took its first casualties. Lase fire and rocket rounds hit with devastating force, and several of the watch went down. The rest fell back in disorder. The sentry lay still behind a boulder, his suit turned down to its lowest energy level and his thermal dam absorbing all its heat.

The Guard was rallying, reacting with speed and certainty, defensive emplacements opened fire on the half-seen figures in the trees, and a barrage of lase fire came from the command bunker, aimed at the unarmored intruders. The alarms were sounding throughout the compound, and a few unarmored Guardsman emerged from the barracks.

The sentry watched as the unprotected attackers came through the barrage untouched, and switched the focus of their attack to the command bunker. They were clad in unarmored combat suits of odd design. His mind raced; he had never seen those suits before, but they were somehow familiar. Moving from cover to cover, they advanced on the bunker, firing lase weapons of equally strange design. Their fire was of uncanny accuracy, and they seemed to be taking few casualties, despite their lack of armor.

The sentry's attention was broken by the sudden rush of a

warrior in power armor. The figure raced past him into the camp, followed by several others. The sentry was shocked to see the design of their suits. There was no way he could fail to recognize it.

Living Steel, he thought. That's Living steel. Across the compound, near the barracks, he saw three more squads of enemy power armor. And those can only be Dragoncrests. He abandoned all thought of joining the fight, and began withdrawing carefully into the forest.

Less than a minute had passed since the beginning of the assault, but the rest of the Guard was up and in their armor. They emerged from the barracks, moving quickly in small groups. Despite the suddenness of the attack, they were already organized. The first squads deployed in blocking positions, while others swept forward in a counterattack.

Their excellent responses were not good enough, however. The attackers had already overrun the outer defenses of the landing zone, and were only a few yards away. The sentry watched as small panels opened on the forearm and shoulder panels of the Dragoncrests' armor, and dozens of flechette darts erupted. Many of the Guard were caught in the open, and casualties were grave.

They attempted to fall back into the barracks, but both Dragoncrest and human attackers were too quick. The rain of flechette darts continued, and more enemy were arriving every moment. As the sentry watched, the first figure in Living Steel forced its way into the barracks, firing its lase cannon and ripple packs simultaneously.

Twenty minutes later, the sentry crouched within the woods, his armor displaying the forest camouflage pattern. He had successfully slipped away during the battle, and had returned for a final look. The vehicle pool had been utterly destroyed, and only occasional bursts of gunfire in the distance indicated that the fight went on, as the reminder of the Guard fled. The command center was burning brightly, and the enemy moved through the wreckage. Their medics were attending the wounded of both sides.

The Guardsman studied the enemy, while his suit recorded every detail of the scene. In the distance, the unarmored attackers were gathering. His BiComp had recognized their suits; it was DRGN armor, made by RMBK. Little attention had been paid to the design when it was discovered, as it seemed to be nearly useless. Somehow, on this battlefield today, that useless armor had stopped lase fire, and allowed its wearers to invade and destroy the headquarters of the Imperial Guard on Rhand.

A pair of power armor troops stood near the edge of the landing zone, part of a sweep through the compound for concealed enemies

and injured personnel. Both were figures from history books, and he recorded their movements carefully. One wore armor with a clean, simple design, and on the shoulder was a green emblem; a shield, bearing a lion's head. That armor design and that emblem belonged only to the warriors of the Seven Worlds.

The other armored figure was even more astonishing. It was broad and powerful, with a pronounced ridge running from its forehead down its neck and back, and out onto the tail of its power armor. Only one creature in known space could fit that description; it was a Dragoncrest.

The sentry waited until they passed, and then slipped away as quietly as he could. He moved northwest, towards Rhand Bondsmen Community 15. The 27th Regiment had troops posted there, and he might be able to get a message out.

RMBK. The Seven Worlds. And Dragoncrests.

They were working together, and the Colonel needed to know. If the power for his armor gave out before he reached RBC15, he would continue on foot. The Colonel needed to know.

The Dragoncrests

Humanity has encountered numerous alien lifeforms during its time in space. Many have had recognizable intelligence. Some have even had technology and civilization.

None have been anything at all like the the Dragoncrests.

The Dragoncrests are a highly intelligent, technologically sophisticated race which is built along reptilian lines. They are extremely warlike, but they fight only for their own unique motives, and never for conquest or vengeance. This is a result of their overwhelming devotion to their code of honor in battle. Morever, they are certainly the most capable, powerful warriors known to Humanity.

More than any other race, they shaped the development of Humanity in general, and the Seven Worlds in particular. They lived on Humanity's borders for a century, a constant test of honor and courage. Much of what is best in the Seven Worlds can be traced to that society's long contact with the Dragoncrests.

Mysteries surround the Dragoncrests on Rhand. How they got there and what they want are unclear; the only thing that is certain is that they will continue to set an unparalleled example of honor and nobility in battle, whenever they are encountered.

History

The early history of the Dragoncrests is unknown. What few facts about their past have surfaced indicate that they are an

old race, and one which has been highly civilized for many millenia. They once ruled their own interstellar empire, one which was apparently far larger than the Starguild Imperium, and developed their technology to levels which Humanity has still not matched. The development of both power armor and teleporter technology can be traced to the Dragoncrests.

Humanity first encountered the Dragoncrests on the Seven Worlds outpost of Mathis VI, in 2140. That meeting quickly escalated into conflict, and for the next century and a half the Dragoncrests waged numerous wars with both the Imperium and the Seven Worlds. Throughout this time they were fighting another war on the far side of their empire, with the Spectrals. They lost that war in 2289, and disappeared suddenly.

They next appeared in 2333, allied with a collection of Seven Worlds renegades. This joint force reached the Seven Worlds system in 2337, and the Third Seven Worlds - Starguild War began. Imperial interest in that war disappeared when the Spectrals attacked Humanity along a broad front in 2339. Contact with the Seven Worlds was lost, and for a decade nothing was known of the Dragoncrests. Their appearance on Rhand was a complete surprise to their old enemy, the Imperial Guard.

Physiology

Dragoncrests weigh about 240 pounds, are built along reptilian lines, and are warm-blooded omnivores. Form the waist up they are essentially humanoid; their torso includes a spine and ribcage, and their powerful arms have the same general uses and range of motion as those of humans. Their legs and lower torso, however, are very different. These are constructed like those of a dinosaur, with a wide carriage, reverse-jointed legs, and a powerful, agile tail that is used for balancing and in combat. Their hands have three fingers and two thumbs, and Dragoncrests also sport a spiked crest which earned them their name; it runs from the forehead all the way down the back and onto the tail.

Dragoncrest vision spans into the infrared, and their eyes are shielded by three sets of eyelids; in addition to the normal type, they have a protective lid that is transparent, and another layer that filters out ultraviolet radiation.

Smell and hearing are likewise good, and the Dragoncrests also have extremely good eye-hand coordination. Consequently, they are very talented in combat and with manipulating technology. Their balance is also superb, aided as it is by use of the tail.

Their needs for food, water, and air are quite similar to those of Humanity. Despite this relative similarity of physiology, they are apparently immune to bacteria, viruses, and poison. This is probably due to one of their most noteworthy attributes, their exceptional regenerative ability. Virtually any wound which does not kill a Dragoncrest outright will heal, and without scaring or long-term disability. In fact, the Dragoncrests are fully capable of regrowning entire limbs when necessary.

Among themselves, Dragoncrests are telepathic. They do not speak to each other at all, and their awareness of each other's activities is phenomenal. Evidence indicates that a Dragoncrest can broadcast its experiences directly to any or all other Dragoncrests, regardless of how near or far away they are; this ability spans light years. This powerful telepathic ability does not mean they are all the same. They have definite individual personalities, and are each quite unique.

Dragoncrests can learn to speak Human languages, although they have heavy accents and are very difficult to understand. Whether they speak or not, however, all Dragoncrests understand human speech, and most of them are literate as well. The race as a whole has an excellent grasp of Humanity's history.

Dragoncrest Honor

In spite of their many oddities, it is the Dragoncrests' unwavering commitment to their code of battle which is their most unusual trait. This code is absolute among Dragoncrests; it is not subject to interpretation, and there are no Dragoncrests anywhere who do not whole-heartly live by its rules. To call it a code, in fact, is misleading; it is simply the way Dragoncrests live, and is utterly unquestioned.

The code is built on warfare and honor. Dragoncrests live to fight. Not to kill, or to conquer, or for any of the other reasons for which Humanity wages war, but simply for the fight itself. To them, all learning and growth come from battle, and for them this may be true. They certainly do very little else. Fighting alone, however, is not enough.

The Dragoncrests feel combat must be honorable to be of value. Battles should be one-on-one, whenever possible, and the odds must certainly never favor the Dragoncrests. Technologies used should be balanced; a Dragoncrest thinks nothing of removing its armor to do battle with a roving beast of prey, for example. They also have no interest in involving beings which do not wish to fight. A non-combatant is utterly safe from Dragoncrest fire.

It is this code and this attitude toward battle which led to the long wars between the Dragoncrests and the Seven Worlds. In the Seven Worlds, the Dragoncrests found worthy opponents, and they believed that wars were a tremendously positive experience for both sides. The idea may seem bizarre, but it has some merit. It is certain that the spirit and sense of honor of the Seven Worlds grew stronger because of their contact with the Dragoncrests. The ability of the society and the dream of the Seven Worlds to endure the defeats and oppression of the Starguild may be traced to their long wars with the Dragoncrests.

It is possible that much of what humans perceive as odd about the Dragoncrests is a result of their long mastery of their environment. They do not perceive anything in the universe as a threat or an enemy, because they were not threatened for the countless millenia of their development. Combat is simply a testing process, in which they seek growth.

As indicated above, there are 4 tiers of Dragoncrests, representing different levels of maturity. Roughly 30% of Dragoncrests are 1st Tier, 60% are 2nd Tier, and 10% 3rd Tier. Only 1 Dragoncrest in 1000 is 4th Tier.

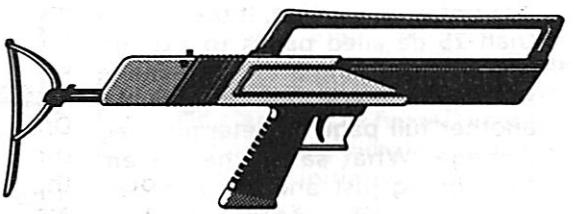
As a Dragoncrest advances through the four Tiers, a process which may take many, many decades, it acquires greater and greater levels of wisdom and sophistication. 1st Tier Dragoncrests are still somewhat infatuated with the thrill and exhiliration of battle, while those of higher Tiers are increasingly focused on the reasons behind a combat.

Gamemaster Suggestions

Dragoncrests are best used sparingly in any campaign. They can be brought into play most effectively if the players show a high degree of interest in the ideals of the Seven Worlds, and if they begin to put these ideals into action. The Dragoncrests have no interest, either positive or negative, in people who do not understand honor.

If a player shows a particular dedication to the ideals of one of the Seven Legions, and if he repeatedly risks his life in pursuit of those ideals, then it is possible, at the GM's discretion, to introduce a 1st Tier Dragoncrest of the same legion to act as that player's partner. The Dragoncrest can be generally run by the player, but it may be necessary for the GM to take control of the alien to guarantee that it behaves in a suitable manner. Remember: Dragoncrests never abandon their code.

Incidentally, the mystery of the DRGN combat suit is answered in the **Trident/RMBK** supplement to **Living Steel**. • SG/FG



Dragoncrest Characteristics

Ranking	STR	INT	WILL	HLTH	AGIL	Combat Level	CA	KV	Armor	Weapon
1st Tier	12	12	20	Spec	20	6	11	300	*	*
2nd Tier	12	13	20	Spec	20	8	12	600	*	*
3rd Tier	14	14	20	Spec	20	12	13	2700	*	*
4th Tier	16	16	20	Spec	20	16	13	7700	*	*

* Dragoncrests use weapons and armor very similar to those of the Seven Worlds. The 7SLR8 Lase Cannon/Rocket Rifle and Living Steel Power Armor may be used to simulate this equipment; it is fully described in **Dragonstar Rising**.

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Space Gamer Reviews

TIMELORDS

Published by:
Blacksburg Tactical Research Center

Designed by:
Greg Porter

Complexity: High
Rules clarity: Reasonable
Graphics quality: Fair
Reviewed by **Rick Swan**

Roleplaying designers have made a few stabs at time travel games, but the results have been mixed, usually because the designers can't figure out what to do with the characters once they get them to different eras. When you've fought dragons in Dwarfland, Neanderthal cavemen don't seem like much.

Timelords isn't particularly satisfying in this respect either, but Greg Porter has come up with enough innovative ideas that the game ranks as one of the best time travel efforts to date. Porter's interpretation of time travel involves a device called the Matrix which allows characters to explore various nexus of time to influence Event Class constructs to influence the flow of history. The details are convoluted, but the effect is to give players a clear understanding of what the game allows them to do (changing history is allowed, for instance, while meeting yourself is not).

Character generation is equally clever. Players in **Timelords** play themselves: that is, if you're a 21 year-old college student named John Smith in real life, you play a 21 year-old college student named John Smith in **Timelords**. Attributes are determined from a player's actual abilities. For instance, if you can hold a 10kg weight straight out from your body for 5 seconds, you have a Strength score of 9. If your SAT score was 700 or you've taken an IQ test which ranked you at the 50th percentile, you have an Intelligence score of 10. All nine basic attributes are determined in similar ways. Skills and abilities are derived both from the basic attributes and the player's real life talents. It's contrived, but fun, and certainly unique.

Porter warns up front that the combat system is complicated, and he's not exaggerating. It takes more than 25 detailed pages to explain combat, including a full page table to determine arm damage and another full page to determine leg damage. What saves the system from being just another number-crunching nightmare are some more interesting ideas, including recoverable Bruise Points and a strange Combat Effects Table that gives damage results ranging from *Out of It* to *Eventually Fatal Wound*.

The strength of the game is its systems. Its weakness is the application of those systems. You're pretty much on your own to develop adventures, as suggestions are all but non-existant. Porter does a good job of explaining his theory of time travel, but doesn't do much with it; for some reason, his history of the multiverse ends at 1980.

The game mechanics, however, contain so many innovative ideas, that **Timelords** is worth a look by anyone interested in alternative approaches to roleplaying. The game may not be available in stores, but you can write for information to **Blacksburg Tactical Research**, 4415 Sprenkle Lane, Richmond, VA 23228 • SG/FG

NEW GAMES FOR OLD!
With your Buy/Sell/Trade listing in the Gamer's Guide: Classified!

FUTURE WORLDS

Published by:
Stellar Gaming Workshop

Designed by:
Patrick Lester

Complexity: Moderate/High
Rules clarity: Good
Graphics quality: Fair
Reviewed by: **Rick Swan**

New premises for roleplaying games are few and far between, which is why I was anxious to give the benefit of the doubt to **Future Worlds**, a game claiming to blend science fiction and fantasy "where empires are won as often by intrigue and sorcery as by the death dealing laser cannons of star destroyers and battle cruisers". That sounded promising, as did the author's criticism of science fiction games with "too much emphasis on science and technology, and not enough on allowing significant development of the player character".

So what happened? The bulk of Future Worlds is devoted to charts, tables, and complicated rule systems - where's all the character development? As for the fantasy, it's confined to a tacked-on chapter about Mystics consisting of four pages of rules and 24-plus pages of spell lists.

The roleplaying system is nothing special. Six character races are available, each with their own primary characteristic scores from which skills and other characteristics are derived. Actions are ridiculously complicated for anyone less than fanatic about detail. Combat is modified by weapon type, movement, position of attacker, position of defender, size of defender, even which hand is being used. For the truly obsessed, there's another

Space Gamer Reviews

dozen or so pages of advanced combat rules. It all seems to work, but no better than a dozen other RPG combat systems that are much less clumsy, so what's the point?

Future Worlds could've been a reasonably good supplement for those wishing to add an advanced combat system to another game. A browse through the spell lists might generate some ideas for an existing fantasy campaign. But as for the game itself - not for me. • SG/FG

KILL THE COMMIE BCENSORED'S!!!

The Ultimate *Roll*-Playing Experience

Published by:
Crunchy Frog Enterprises

Designed by:
Paul A. Lindberg

Price: $3.00
Complexity: Low
Rules clarity: Good
Graphics quality: Fair
Reviewed by: **Jeff Albanese**

Kill The Commie BCENSORED's!!! - The Ultimate Roll-Playing Experience allows gamers to play Arnold Schwarzenegger, Chuck Norris, and all those other action characters, with a heavy dose of Hollywood thrown in for laughs.

The rules are very simple and easy to learn. All one needs is two 10-sided dice, paper & pencil to play. The use of miniatures or even plastic soldiers would add more color to the game.

A character has four statistics: Mind, Body, Dexterity, and Accuracy. These are rolled up with the two 10-sided dice, with additions depending on your rolls. The four stats are pretty clear, with your mind and body scores being used to figure out your hit points.

The next step is to determine your character class. There are three types: Blasters - These are your gun nuts, Flamers - They love flamethrowers, and Kung Fu Fighters - These are your Chuck Norris/Bruce Lee types. Each class has its bonuses and very few drawbacks.

Characters may improve their stats thru experience, and the only way one gains experience is by killing commies, which leads us to the combat and movement rules. Movement is your Body stat divided by 10, which allows you to move a certain amount of hexes(?) per turn. Combat is very simple to do. First, you roll for initiative, but after the commies get their action for the turn, the PC's get a second action, just like the movies! Each player gets two action points per turn, and they have various options that they can use each turn. Your Accuracy stat determines how well you can hit, with modifiers for range, cover, movement, etc. For hand-to-hand fighting, your dexterity comes into play.

Two nice rules that apply only to the PC's: 1) They cannot die if a commie shoots them, and 2) Their weapons never run out of ammunition, nor do they ever jam up, just like in the movies.

The last few pages in the rulebook give you three adventures ("On the road to...), plus a campaign adventure, along with a blank character sheet for you to copy.

After all of this, is the game worth it? Well, if you want a change of pace from "normal" role-playing games, then you want to play this ROLL-playing game. It was designed to mock action films that one sees on the screen, and it does a great job at that. It's easy to learn, and it plays very quickly, so that you can kill lots of commies in your spare time. So make Paul's day and buy **Kill The Commie BCENSORED's!!!** • SG/FG

THE 2nd EDITION PARANOIA FORM PACK

Published by:
West End Games

Designed by:
Steven Gilbert

Complexity: Huh!?
Reviewed by: **Don Towers**

Greetings, Citizen Gamemaster! Are you tired of having to **pretend** that those stained pieces of illegible torn paper you've palmed off on your players were really vital Alpha Complex documents, documents so vital that the very wheels of The Computer's bureaucracy might gnash to a halt should one player **disbelieve** their importance? If so, then fear no more!

Our Friend, The Computer has provided some (but not enough) of the various types of forms necessary to:

- invoke the stench of waiting lines of non-processed people
- mirror the futility of trying to beat City Hall
- create triplicated bureaucratic nonsensical detail
- inform Internal Security about you!

Yes! (or is that No! ?) These types of forms are now available in this latest accessory pack from West End. You receive ten (10) Form Request Form 2212/HHK, which is sort of a master request form for nearly 40 other forms (like the Chapstick Cap Replacement Form [part 1 of 7]); four (4) Equipment/ Weapon/Vehicle Request Forms, with such necessary questions as "If 'No' please list all other ways in which you feel The Computer has

Space Gamer Reviews

erred"; and lastly, four (4) copies of the ever necessary Equipment Complaint Form B4379-10(398) 7R which courteously attempts to define blame as it applies to ruined equipment.

You also get a three page mini-adventure that lets you, The Gamemaster, try out these examples of government by the best and brightest. This adventure is somewhat styled on the *PLC Runaround Flowchart* that appeared in the *Send in the Clones* module, in that there are more than a few departments that must be correctly satisfied before the mission is accomplished. It's a fun romp.

In rebuttal, **West End** only gives you three different forms, which limits the amount of vicarious fun you can put players through. Unless you make up your own forms to fit the Form Request Form titles, you may find that throwing the same three forms at your players will quickly turn into no fun. Perhaps **West End** intends to issue more form packs down the road; they don't say.

You should be selective as to whether you want to include this accessory into your games. The humor might wear off too quickly to be of lasting value, whereas the money spent on the usually well-written modules is of better value.

• SG/FG

OPERATION: CONTACT

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STAR EMPIRES

Published by:
Stargames

Designed by:
Richard G. Mathews

Price: $9.95 U.S.
Complexity: Intro/Low
Rules clarity: Good
Graphics quality: Fair
Reviewed by: Perrin D. Tong

"Star Empires is a fast-moving card game for two to six players that can be completed in an hour. Be the first to accumulate the right number and type of planets and rule the galaxy!"

Well, it's got cuteness, it's got potential, it's got... it's got.... It's got something missing (the 6-sided die needed to play).

The game comes in a box, the Black and White artwork cover art is courtesy of Lou Zocchi. The game cards are of sturdy, glossy stock.

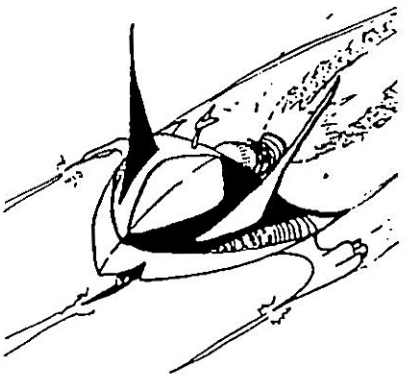
The PLANET DECK contains 14 "triads" of planets. A triad consists of one red, one green and one blue planet. It also contains six Early Warning Systems (EWS).

The SHIP DECK contains Scouts, Transports, Merchants, Cruisers, Battleships, Dreadnoughts and Planetery Defenses (PDF).

The object of the game is to obtain a number of "triads" that varies with the number of players.

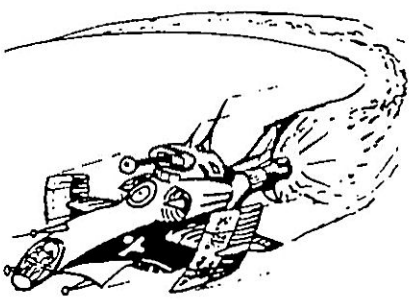
To begin with, each player starts with one Scout, one Transport, one Merchant and one complete "triad". Planet cards are placed face-up in front of the owning player while ship cards are held in one's hand.

Players perform "missions" as part of their turn. Each non-warship (Scout, Transport, Merchant) may perform one mission per turn.



Colonizing with a Transport allows you to draw a card from the PLANET DECK.

Commerce with a Merchant allows you to draw a card from the SHIP DECK.



Warships (Cruisers, Battleships, Dreadnoughts) allow players to attempt (or defend against) an interception of a players mission. Combat is conducted by the roll of the die, with the higher number rolled winning. If intercepting ships are destroyed, the mission goes through. If the intercepting ships are not destroyed, the mission is aborted.

So, the player interaction is there. And the more the merrier! Pirating, Spying, Combat, Colonizing, Trading, and basic gamer swindling are all aspects of the game that the players fill in. As it states, it's a "fast-moving card game".

Although, after playing it a few times, even though I still feel there's "a little something" missing, I still think it's a *FUN LITTLE CARD GAME*. If you cannot find it in your local store, contact **Stargames** at: 7153 N. Atlantic, Portland, OR 97217

• SG/FG

P B M R e v i e w

Warp Force Empires

Published by:
Emprise Game Systems

Price: Rules $4.50 U.S.
Set-up $18.50 U.S.
($4.50 set-up fee, $5 refundable completion deposit, and first two turns at $4.50 each in USA, more elsewhere)
Complexity level: Moderate
Rules quality: Excellent (60 page booklet)
Reviewed by: Sam Moorer

This isn't just another **Starweb** clone. True, they are both totally computer-moderated, play-by-mail (PBM), space exploration and conquest games. Both are set on a two-dimensional map which changes between games. Both run turns every two to three weeks. And both pit a dozen or so players against each other. Each player may select from a number of racial types, each with its own abilities, needs and differing ways of gathering points towards victory. This classical PBM arrangement builds into each game inevitable conflicts and opportunities for co-operation.

Finally, both companies have similar policies. Both keep individual player ratings for each racial type. Both encourage stand-by players to replace drop-outs. Whereas **Flying Buffalo, Inc.** was a pioneer in PBM with **Starweb**, and established the industry standard for accuracy in turn processing and fiduciary responsibility, **Emprise Games Systems** seems to be no less accurate or responsible. One hopes that they can make the transition from a one-man-show into a successful business

So, what's the difference in these two games? Well, to begin, **Warp Force Empires (WFE)** is a more complicated game. There are three different kinds of raw materials which are required, in differing proportions, to build nine different products. There are two different ship types, freighters which do the hauling and warships which can fight. Each type can be of seven to nine different sizes, and each can be repaired (for a price). There are also planetary defense forts to hold the frontier. There are warp engines which are needed at each star system for interstellar travel. Your alliance level may permit you to use your neighbor's engines, which will vastly expand your exploration abilities. And then there are the four different planetary environmental types. Each as its own corresponding type of colonist who must populate each world before those valuable raw materials can be produced. And of course, not everybody likes every possible climate, so there are differing survival ratios for mis-matched colonists and planets. Somehow it always seem that those type "L" raw materials I need to build heavy warships all seem to be produced only in my part of the galaxy on those darned type "C" planets, which kill 100% of my hapless type "B" colonists. But, who said that galactic conquest was supposed to be easy? The sixty page rule book helps the novice more than in any other PBM game. There aren't really sixty pages of rules, most are examples, sample printouts, and even demonstration turns. The beginner will find a page of hints for a successful opening.

But the biggest difference is that this game requires that all inter-player communication be conducted through the game itself. That's right - this PBM game doesn't require expensive long-distance phone calls, or even post cards. You're not backing up all of your promises and deals with your personal word of honor. You don't carry your reputation from game to game. For once you can play mad-dog aggressor without risking retribution from a disgruntled neighbor in a future game. **WFE** abolishes grudge matches without abolishing all interplayer com-munication by using CorGaSyL (Correspondence Gamer's Symbolic Language). It's a vocabulary of 476 words and phrases, each represented by a two-letter alpha-betical code which may be mani-pulated by a number of modifiers of grammatical usage, punctuation, meaning reversal, and even mood and intonation (Friendly or Conciliatory, through Hostile, to even Angry or Jubilant, etc.). But the limit of only sixty message characters allowed per turn of all communications forces great economy in diplomacy. Is my ally's response so brief because he's talking to other players, or is he hiding something? **Emprise Game Systems** makes a great, and apparently successful, effort to exclude all phone numbers, addresses, or other identifying characteristics from the messages. This keeps you from suddenly facing a prearranged team of opponents, the bane of many PBM games. It is this unique quality of diplomacy which I feel suits the PBM gamer. After all, he could be playing face-to-face games a lot cheaper, especially if he lacks access to a WATTS line. It's these terse communiques, often sounding strangely like the inter-species pigeon it's supposed to represent, which overshadow all of the technical ideosyncrasities and which give **WFE** its own particular flavor.

For more information, contact;
Emprise Game Systems
PO Box 9078-51,
Van Nuys, CA 91409

• SG/FG

The Ruler
by Martin A. Stever

Wowser! Did you know that during the month of February it would have cost you about $670 to purchase every one of the top selling 200 comic books printed? Now, if you have the $670 and the time to read 200 comics every month stop reading this column! If you don't have that much money or time read on. This is a guide to the ten best comic books.

This is the first in what will be a regular column on comic books. Most columns will focus on comics of special interest to gamers. This issue's column is devoted to my ten favorite ongoing comic series. These ten should give you a benchmark or *ruler* against which to measure your tastes against mine. If you also enjoy these comics than chances are you'll like other comics that I will recommend. If you hate these comics then you might as well give it up now because I won't be writing about the comics you do like. Chances are you'll agree with some choices and disagree with others, fair enough.

Although many of the writers and artists on these series are mentioned, just as many are not. Every successful series probably has a good editor, inker, colorist, letterer, and perhaps some assistant editors, senior editors, art directors and others who have a significant impact on the month-to-month quality of the book. Here the spotlight only shines on those who seem to be the driving force(s) in achieving quality. This should in no way belittle the efforts of those who go unmentioned. A comic book can never achieve greatness if the team that produces it does not strive together for greatness.

All these series are ongoing. That is, no mini-series, one-shots, maxi-series, super-cross-overs, graphic novels, or series-within-a-series were considered. They are given in no particular order.

SUPERMAN

Written and drawn by John Bryne, published by **DC**. Byrne's name has become synonymous with quality. Byrne's run on **X-MEN** (where he was credited as co-plotter as well as penciller) is the anchor that title's popularity is still moored. Bryne's run on **FANTASTIC FOUR** was a paradox. While refreshingly original, his stories drew on and paid homage to the **FF** as presented by Jack kirby and Stan Lee. Byrne's work on **ALPHA FLIGHT** and **HULK** was no less exciting.

Now Byrne is working on the grandaddy of them all, **SUPERMAN**, with terrific results. Byrne's clean and crisp yet bold style of drawing lends itself well to the Man of Steel's heroics. At the same time Byrne's tireless imagination has put new energy into what had been one of the most lifeless titles running.

The new Clark Kent is no longer a wimp but a well built, top notch reporter. **Superman's** first allegiance no longer lies with a long dead planet but with the good old U.S. of A. **Superman** is no longer harrassed by an endless number of dips carrying multi-colored Kryptonite; Byrne's Lex Luthor is a big enough threat that Superman doesn't need many other enemies to keep things exciting. Perhaps most importantly, Byrne has made Superman human enough that we can understand and like him. Thank you John Bryne for making Superman *super* again.

JUSTICE LEAGUE INTERNATIONAL

Written by Giffen & DeMatteis, pencils by Kevin Maquire, published by **DC**. I hope the literary marriage of Griffen & DeMatteis is a long one. I haven't liked their pervious solo work, but this joint effort on **JLI** has struck the often sought, but seldom achieved, balance between action and humor. The heroes trade punchlines as often as punches.

Maguire gives individual attention to a large and everchanging cast of colorful heroes including **Martian Manhunter, Captain Atom, Rocket Red, Blue Beetle, Black Canary, Green Lantern, Booster Gold, Batman, Miracle Man, Captain Marvel, Dr. Fate,** and **Oberon** with great skill. Maguire's style animates the Justice Leaguers making heroic efforts and taking verbal jibes with equal ease. Thanks to clever characterization and wit, this creative team makes team moving day as exciting and as much fun as a brush with Armageddon.

AREA 88

Story and art by Kaoru Shintani, published by **Eclipse**. This bi-weekly title is reprinted in black and white from the original Japanese versions. If you like planes you'll like this comic book. The main characters are mercenary pilots in the tradition of the Foreign Legion. They live in and fly over Area 88, a combat zone in a nameless Middle East country. Each man has become a mercenary for his own reasons, usually to escape or recapture his past. The hero, Shin, only wants to stay alive in order to return to Tokyo and the girl he loves.

Each issue includes one day's mission, but the underlying story concerns loyalty, friendship, and futility of war. The art is impressive, especially the ability to render moving jet aircraft. True to real war, characters are killed with regularity but not without remorse.

OMAHA, THE CAT DANCER

Written by Reed Waller and Kate Worley, published by **Kitchen Sink**. This is the story about a girl, her friends and lovers. The plot is so rich that it would be a disservice to attempt to sum it up in the small space available here. It is better said that it is a story that does not pull punches and in its essence rings more true to the values of our time than anything short of Tom Wolfe. This book often contains nudity and explicit sexual scenes, therefore, it is not for children (read anyone seventeen or younger) and in many comic shops is not openly displayed but must be asked for at the counter.

STRIKE!

Written by Chuck Dixon, art by Tom Lyle & Romeo Tanghal, a **4 Winds Production** published by **Eclipse**. **Strike!** is a traditional costumed hero who has never read the Comics Code. A teenage boy finds the power belt of an almost forgotten Sgt. Strike, a tough, rude hero that fought for the US in WWII and Korea and disappeared during the McCarthy years. Six issues into the series the new Strike has killed

CIA agents, stolen money from the local pusher to set his Mama up in style, been kidnapped and tortured, and is now in space working with the mysterious aliens who have searched the galaxy for the power stone that gives **Strike** his powers.

The strength of this comic is solid art and Dixon's stories. The reader has absolutely no idea as to what is going to happen next; so each story is a real adventure. The hero, the archetypal poor but bright high school student, is written with realistic human motivations, making us very sympathetic to his cause, beating the tar out of the bad guys.

AIRBOY

Along with a variety of one-shots and mini-series featuring **Airboy, Skywolf,** and **Valkyrie**; all written by Chuck Dixon with primary artists being Stan Woch, Tom Lyle, and Willie Blyberg, published by **Eclipse**. Like **STRIKE!**, the **Airboy** comics, by Dixon, revamp a series that has been out of print for decades and whose original publishing company is dust in the wind. I liked this monthly more when it was bi-weekly, probably because I can't get enough of it.

This **Airboy**, son of the original, flies a computer-brained batwinged plane. His best friends are his mentor **Hirota**, a Japanese ace who was shot down by the original **Airboy** during WWII; **Skywolf**, an adventurer in his 60's who flies a heavily armed jet-copter; and **The Heap**, a WWI aviator who has become a walking compost pile. Together the four, along with **Airboy's** love interest **Valkyrie**, and a cast of a half dozen other airfighters, get into high-flying political intrigue and action around the globe. Some of **Airboy's** adventures are a wee bit on the supernatural side. **Misery**, a leech who feeds off of others suffering, is out to kill **Airboy**, as are a group of rats that live in New Jersey.

A highlight of this comic is the back-up feature. Along with the main story line, each issue includes a few pages from the lives of the supporting cast, including **Skywolf, Bald Eagle, Riot O'Hare**, and **The Heap**. The key to this book's success has been the balance Dixon has stuck between adventure, humor, mystery, and romance. This, along with break-neck pacing and plenty of action in every issue have made **Airboy** a monthly event I look forward to. This is the kind of comic book John Wayne would read.

WARLOCK 5

By Gordon Derry and Denis Beauvais. Published by **Aircel**. Five odd beings fight for the most important thing that ever was; I think. The lure of this book is that the reader is unsure of exactly what is going on. Lots of magic, guns, swords, robots, babes, motorcycles, and very nice art. This title sometimes features graphic violence and partial nudity and therefore sometimes isn't sold to anyone seventeen or younger.

ELEMENTALS

By Bill Willingham, Jack Herman, and Keith S. Wilson, published by **Comico**. This is the scariest comic book.The four title characters have died and been resurrected with the power of their respective element, earth, air, fire, and water. Having already beaten **Saker**, the man who would have plunged our world into chaos, they must now destroy the evil, magical crea-tures that are continually being created from **Saker's** passing.

Although the **Elementals** appear to be your standard everyday superheros with colorful costumes and neat powers, the **Elemental's** adversaries are anything but run-of-the-mill comic fare. The things that the **Elementals** are called on to fight are SCARY! I had to set the last issue down and pause to regain my composure after a rather grisly series of deaths. The villains in **Elementals** are unusually cold, manipulative, often have no regard for human life, and no qualms about killing an innocent if it will give a temporary upper hand or emotionally hurt the good guys. Willingham's imagination must be on overdrive to come up with some of the far out ideas in Elementals. The title is often labeled, "Suggested for mature readers", because of sexual situations, language, and content.

GRENDEL

Written by Matt Wagner, published by **Comico**. This is another comic that features a new vision of the costumed "hero". This is one of most exciting, dynamic, and unusual comic books ever conceived. **Grendel** is a demon that hops from person to person. Although we never see the demon we do see the effects of his possession. Each of the demon's hosts, unaware they are possessed, takes on the name **Grendel**. The first **Grendel** is a brilliant young man who takes over East Coast crime syndicates. The second **Grendel**, biographer of the first, fights the vampire that killed her son. The third **Grendel**, lover of the second, attempts to avenge her death.

Each incarnation of **Grendel** is rendered by a different artist, giving new emotional overtones to the book. The first **Grendel** as drawn by Matt Wagner in an Art Deco style. He was followed by the Pander Brothers and then Bernie Mireault. Each artist brings new perspective and a new slant to the comic. Hence, it does not fall into the rut of blandness so many comic series suffer from. These artist changes also allow Wagner to further his explorations of the comic medium while maintaining a traditional ongoing title.

NEXUS

By Mike Barron and Steve Rude (with regularly scheduled fill-ins by Paul Smith), published by **First**. This is the best monthly comic book being published today. **Nexus** is the story of **Horatio Hellpop**, who has been given great powers by the mysterious **Merk**. **Nexus** suffers through violent dreams sent by the **Merk**, which are filled with the dark visions of mass murderers. **Nexus** is then forced to track down and kill the killers for reasons he doesn't entirely understand because the **Merk** is so alien. Filled with guilt that comes from killing, **Nexus** often teaters on the brink of insanity and emotional breakdown.

The success of the book is due, in part, to its greatly detailed setting. Together Baron and Rude have fleshed out an entire future universe that is as rich and original as anything that I've seen in any

medium. Man has gone to the stars; there he has met many different races. The conflict between capitalists (The Web) and communists (The Sovs) has grown beyond the confines of earth. **Nexus'** home, the moon Ylum, has become a refuge for political dissidents. Each planet **Nexus** visits has it own charms, as well as at least one murderer who thinks he/she has escaped justice.

Nexus rates number one for several reasons. Often I find the covers by Steve Rude alone worth the price of the book. Colorist Les Dorscheid's work stands head and shoulders above any other colorist's who is on a regular series. Both Rude and Smith maintain such consistantly high quality art that my mind boggles when I look at the drek that some companies pass off for art in titles that outsell **Nexus** two to one. If you have read this far then do yourself a favor and go out and BUY A COPY OF **NEXUS**! I guarantee you won't be disappointed. Clever, original, action packed stories along with beautiful art keep this book on the cutting edge of creativity in the comic medium.

So that's it, the top ten. Some of you are probably under eighteen and unhappy that three of my top ten are not usually available to you. Don't worry about it. There's plenty of good stuff that didn't make this list that isn't, so-called "adult" material. Some of you are probably disappointed your favorite isn't in the list. Sorry, there are lots of comics and ten is only twice five and, "95% of everything is crap". Send me your top ten, you read mine and I'd like to read yours. Next time: Gaming and Comics, Which Superhero Teams are Best for Role-Playing.

Marty A. Stever works for ***Capital City Distribution****, the Largest comic book distributor in the United States. He has been reading comics for some twenty years and been adventure gaming for fifteen. A graduate of the University of Michigan with a B.A. in Liberal Arts. He is the co-designer of the* ***Elfquest*** *Boardgame* ***(Mayfair Games)*** • SG/FG

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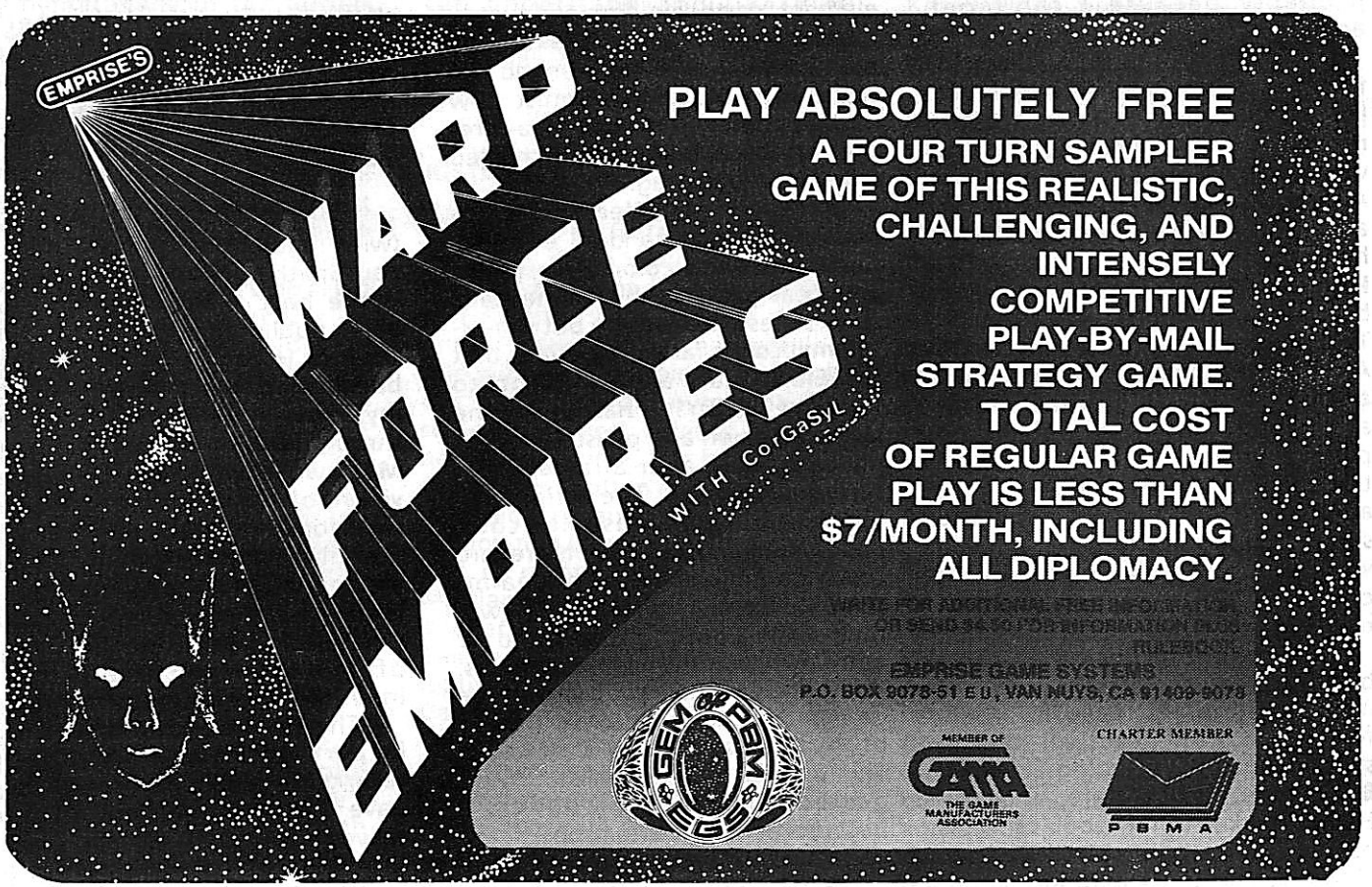
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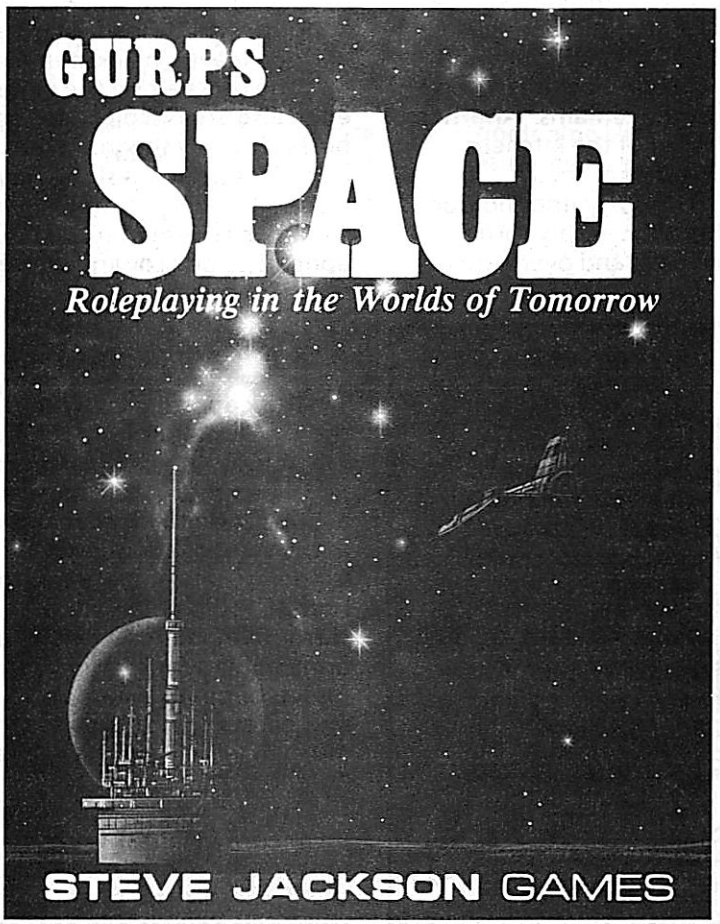

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A Plague In Westbrook

An AD&D Scenario by Gary Reilly

The king's tax collector is overdue. The collector and his bodyguard of six mounted men-at-arms were expected back at the castle more than two weeks ago, but they have not arrived. The last stop in their planned circuit was Westbrook, a small village only a few days ride to the east. It is possible that the tax collector and his troop fell victim to foul play. Yet the people of the Kingdom have been loyal supporters in the past.

Being nobly concerned for the official's health (as well as having a financial interest), the King wishes to locate the missing troop and insure their well-being. Thus, the King selects your party of faithful supporters to go to Westbrook and discover the reason for the tax collector's delay.

The Village of Death

The journey to Westbrook is uneventful. The adventures arrive at the village outskirts late in the afternoon. An astute character may observe that something is out of the ordinary as the party approaches the cluster of building that make up the agricultural community. Although it is only late August and, therefore, still early in the season, the crops surrounding Westbrook have already been harvested. The grain fields have been trimmed close to the ground.

Upon entering the village, it becomes apparent to everyone that things are not right. No people are to be seen. An unnerving silence hangs over the community. Closer inspection reveals scatted bones lying among the vacant buildings. Included in these remains are the partial skeletons of small domesticated animals: dogs, cats, pigs. Many of the bones have been neatly severed as by heavy axe blows.

The doors to several of the dwellings stand wide open. Others are bolted from the inside and must be forced to gain entry. A search of the interiors turns up more signs of carnage. Here again, bones lie strewn about, including those of horses and cows in the stable. The disheveled state of some rooms indicates that the inhabitants had struggled. Dried blood lies in pools around all of the remains. Another oddity is that all of the kitchens have been cleared of their foodstuffs. The party finds no trace of food other than empty torn burlap grain bags and overturned barrels.

At the Prancing Elk Tavern, one of the larger buildings, the adventurers discover the tax collector's party. Their bones lie in a communal sleeping room. Under one of the rope cots is the undisturbed chest containing the collected taxes. Consisting mostly of copper and silver coins, the amount equals 184 gold pieces.

Another unusual item appears along the stream that flows along the village's eastern boundary (thus the name Westbrook). The plants growing on the banks of the stream are oddly overgrown and misshapen. Quite a few display abnormal colors including deep maroon leaves, black stems, and so on. The rocks along the stream's edge also are discolored. Some possess an oily sheen. A brackish odor rises from the slow-moving water. Looking up and down the stream, one sees that the foliage appears to be growing larger to the north (upstream).

Terror in the Night

Dusk approaches by the time the party completes the search of Westbrook. The characters must decide on their next course of action. Should they decide to stay in the village, about an hour after sundown, it comes alive with horror. From holes in the surrounding fields emerges a large army of giant ants. Hundreds of the insects begin to scour the immediate countryside for food, much of which they have already "gathered".

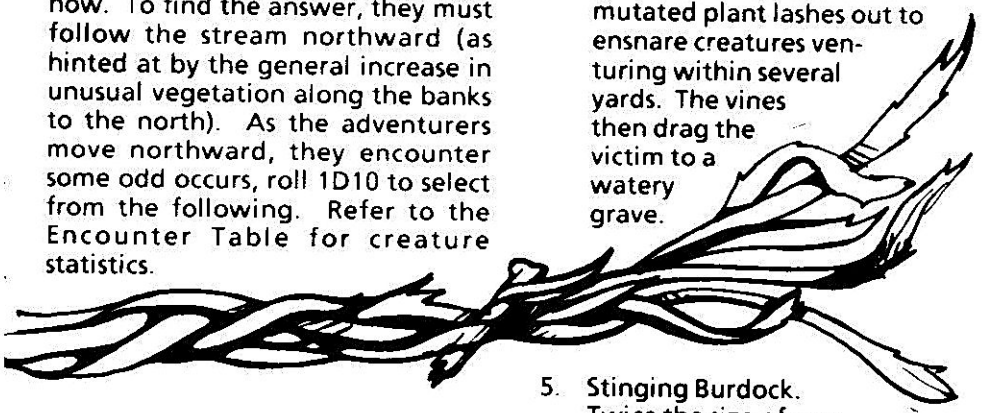
These nocturnal creatures have invaded Westbrook and killed its unsuspecting inhabitants. Stripping the flesh from the bones with strong mandibles, the ants ate voraciously and carried the excess food back to their nest (under the field nearest the stream). They also cleared the grain crop.

If the adventurers remain within the village for the night, they will be attacked quickly. Severe losses probably will take place unless the party possesses suitable magic. Bright light holds the ants at a distance for a while. However, they will advance to claim the "food" that they have found. Should the party survive until dawn, the ants return to the nest.

If the characters make camp outside of Westbrook, they face less danger. A sentry may observe the movement of the ants in the fields and alert the party. Otherwise, a random encounter roll indicates that a small body of ants (4D12 in number) discovers the campsite and attacks. Standing and fighting this scouting party for too long a time allows the main body to be called for dinner! The best tactic may be to run away, preferably on horseback.

Follow the Yellowbrick Road

As you may expect, the ants of Westbrook are only a part of the mystery. The adventurers should be curious as to the ants' sudden appearance. None have been reported anywhere in the kingdom before now. To find the answer, they must follow the stream northward (as hinted at by the general increase in unusual vegetation along the banks to the north). As the adventurers move northward, they encounter some odd occurs, roll 1D10 to select from the following. Refer to the Encounter Table for creature statistics.



1. Giant Ants. Similar to those found in Westbrook. Encountered only at night, otherwise roll again.

2. Crazed Bear. A large bear that has been drinking from the steam. Its mind is destroyed, causing the animal to attack any creature it meets in a berserker's rage. (Note: If the characters are foolish enough to drink from the stream, each must make a daily saving roll below his/her Wisdom or turn on their fellow adventurers in a crazed fury!)

3. Giant Water Beetle. Enlarged to giant size, this insect measures 6 feet in length. Its huge mandibles are capable of snipping through any armor.

4. Rope Reed. Growing in deep pools along the stream, this mutated plant lashes out to ensnare creatures venturing within several yards. The vines then drag the victim to a watery grave.

5. Stinging Burdock. Twice the size of normal burdock, brushing against this plant results in painful welts. The pointed burrs penetrate leather armor, injecting a mild poison. The character must roll a Save Versus Poison or be paralyzed for 4-16 hours.

6. Giant Water Snake. A common non-poisonous water snake, this specimen has grown to extraordinary proportions, reaching 30 feet in length. Although still non-poisonous, the snake's bite inflicts considerable damage.

7. Diving Birds. These birds may be of any common variety. However, their brains have been affected. Attracted to the glint of sunlight on metallic armor, they dive directly onto the party. Dashing themselves against the armor, there is little chance of damage. A larger bird such as ahawk may unseat the surprised adventurer.

8. Whip Weed. Coming too close to this tall grass-like plant solicits a violent reaction. The individual sprouts lash out with the strength of bullwhips. Unarmored skin can suffer deep gashes.

9. Giant Newt. A 15 foot version of the newt found along most rivers. It possesses lightning speed. The newt grabs its surprised prey and carries it off to an underground lair dug out of the stream bank.

10. Hunter Hares. Descendants of fast-breeding hares, these creatures have turned into onmivorous terrors. They are the size of large dogs and retain the dashing speed of their smaller parents. However, their strong front teeth can penetrate armor and the forearms sport sharp three-inch claws. The creatures hunt in packs.

Encounter Table

Roll	Creature	Number Appearing	Armor Class	Movement Rate	Hit Dice	Number of Attacks	Damage
1.	Giant Ants	4-48	3	18	2	1 Bite	1-4
2.	Crazed Bear	1	7	12	3 + 3	1 Bite	1-6
						2 Claws	1-3/1-3
3.	Giant Water Beetle	1	3	6	4	1 Bite	2-12
4.	Rope Weed	1	8	8	3	3 Grapples	Special
5.	Stinging Burdock	1-3	8	8	2	2 Stings	Special
6.	Giant Water Snake	1	5	15	4	1 Bite	1-12
7.	Diving Birds	1-6	8	48	0	1 Dive	0
8.	Whip Weed	1	8	0	2	3 Whips	1-2
9.	Giant Newt	1	5	24	3 + 3	1 Bite	2-8
10.	Hunter Hare	3-9	6	18	2 + 3	1 Bite	1-4
						2 Claws	1-3/1-3

The Source of Trouble

On the third day out of Westbrook, the adventurers come upon the cause of the strange events. The plant life along the stream grows steadily larger and more unusual as the party makes its way northward. In a light forest, the vegetation abruptly drops away to normal. Near the edge of the stream stands a rough-hewn stone cottage. Its windows shuttered.

Half a dozen of the hunter hares lie around the cottage, lying siege to the cottage. Barricaded behind the walls is Ensor Peppincorn, the inadvertent cause of the troubles.

Peppincorn is an elderly human who has lived in this cottage for several years. Once a well-known alchemist, he moved to this secluded spot to continue his research without the bothersome interruptions from people seeking his services. Peppincorn is somewhat eccentric and downright forgetful at times.

The source of the problem is a small stone cistern where Peppincorn dumps his chemical mixtures after completing his experiments. The cistern lies back in the woods, about 50 yards from the cottage and the stream. When the wind blows in the right direction, the noxious odor of the cistern can be smelled around the cottage.

Several months ago, the wall of the cistern crumbled inward, releasing the chemical stew. Spring rains washed this sludge into the nearby stream. Carried downstream, the diluted chemicals interacted with the plant, animal and insect life along the stream, resulting in the bizarre lifeforms. The most noticeable effects occur in the lower forms of life and those with a higher frequency of reproduction.

Peppincorn failed to notice the changes taking place about him as he continued with his research. However, the mutated hares arrived a few weeks ago. Peppincorn barricaded himself in the cottage, surviving on rainwater collected from roof runoffs and his meager foodstuffs. Spotting the arrival of the adventurers, Peppincorn calls to them for rescue.

Assuming that the party rescues the alchemist, Peppincorn eventually pieces together the story. The chemical contamination finally loses its effect a few miles south of Westbrook as the stream eventually dilutes the chemicals sufficiently. The adventurers must return to the King with the story and begin the process of cleansing the area around Westbrook of the bizarre and harmful lifeforms.

• SG/FG

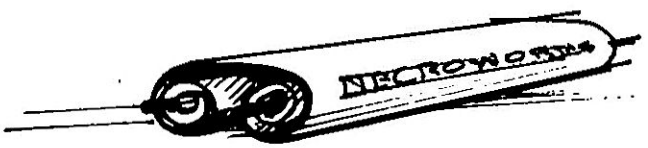
Necroworms
A New Spell And Creature for Runequest

By Michael DeWolfe

Necroworms are beings created by sorcerers for particular tasks. They are hideous and ghastly to confront, having the head and chronological appearance of their creator but a body equivalent to that of a two year old.

They receive their name because of their ways. They are created to perform one purpose and little of anything else. They carry out their purpose until they die or are successful. Because of their limited intelligence, they often cannot be trained to eat or rest and often meet their end by exhaustion and starvation. They are ferretous and are held in disgust by even the creator they liken to.

The following sorcery spell is for the creation of necroworms and they are listed as creatures.



Create Necroworm Sorcery Spell Ritual (Enchanting)

This spell can create a necroworm to perform a task of the enchanter's wishes. To create one, the sorcerer must start with (1D4 + 3) SIZ points of dust to shape its from. The sorcerer must lower POW by 1D2 points and all other characteristics but INT, by one. Then the spell is cast. If it fails, the sorceror's abilities are still lowered and the dust has been spread into the winds. If successful, the necroworm comes into being with all characteristics but INT and SIZ equaling 1/3 the caster's current characteristics. The SIZ of the dust and the INT is generated using 2D3 + 1.

Upon success, the caster can give its creation 1D4 + 4 tasks; add one if the caster's INT is over fifteen and subtract one if it's under eleven. The tasks involve simple things such as following a certain person, casting a spell, eating when hungry, sleeping when tired, not walking into fire, et cetera. The tasks, when combined, form everything the necroworm will ever do. The necroworm can have one skill or spell per point of INT, if the caster has the same skills or spells. The necroworms chances with these are equal to ((INT x 4) + Pertinent Skill Modifier) and the use of skills must be included as a task or they won't be utilized. For example, a necroworm could have the skill of climb which may pertain to following a target; or it could have the spell Skin Of Life, which would mean the necroworm may be allowed to also have Intensity, Range and Duration for the spell. But, keep in mind that only one spell or skill can be learned per point of INT. They have little personal knowledge; their personality, if any, is that of their creator.

Though necroworms themselves are not evil, usually only evil sorcerers resort to using them.

Necroworms

Necroworms are beings created by sorcerers with the spell Create Necroworm (qv). They are small beings with the bodies of two year olds and the face of the sorcerer that created them. A member of any race can create them and necroworms resemble their masters to that extent. They serve only one purpose or task with knowledge of little else. They are given 1D4 + 4 things to do so such as eating, sleeping. following, casting a spell when trapped, etc. Anything they were told not to do, they cannot do. Simple minded, they wander off to their death after completing what they were set out to do, though few do survive if implanted with the knowledge of how to care for themseleves. They are only occasionally violent if taught how to be. If the creature is created by an adventurer during the course of play, use the characteristics mentioned there over these.

The creator of the necroworm can implant up to five (INT) skills or sorcery spells that involve its tasks. All spells are equal to ((INT x 4) + Skill Modifier). Below is a sample of a necroworm. • SG/FG

Necroworm

Characteristics		Average
STR	3D3	6
CON	1D6 + 2	5-6
SIZ	1D4 + 3	5-6
INT	2D3 + 1	5
POW	3D3	9-10
DEX	1D6 + 3	6-7
APP	1D6 + 3	6-7
Move		4
Hit Points		6
Fatigue		12

Hit Location	Melee	Missile	Points
R Leg	01-04	01-03	0/2
L Leg	05-08	04-06	0/2
Abdomen	09-11	07-10	0/2
Chest	12	11-15	0/3
R Arm	13-15	16-17	0/2
L Arm	16-18	18-19	0/2
Head	19-20	20	0/2

Weapon	SR	Attack%	Damage
usually none	-	-	-

Armor: Any that its creator put on it. Usually none.

Skills and Spells:
Climb 20-2, Dodge 20-2, Plant Lore 20-5, Drain 20-7, Intensity 20-7.

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Aerial Warfare in Call of Cthulhu

by Bob Kindel

The piloting skills in ***Call of Cthulhu*** *are fine for those who simply want to get from point A to point B. But what happens when someone shoots at you as you're going?*

Dogfights between two (or more) planes use different skills other than ordinary flying and should be handled in a special manner to reflect this difference.

Some players resolve such fights by switching to another game system designed for such combat (such as ***Nova Games Ace Of Aces*** *or* ***TSR Inc's Dawn Patrol****). After the combat is resolved, Call of Cthulhu is resumed. This method works but has two major drawbacks:*

It requires that you learn a separate rule system, and if you and your players already own and use a separate system, fine. But if don't, are you willing to go to the trouble and expense a new system entails just to be ready for an occurrence that is fairly rare. It also disrupts the game flow. Good role-playing requires that you get into a different mindset; that you consciously become the character. If you switch to a different system, you lose this mindset, and lose some of the enjoyment of the game.

These problems can be avoided by using an aerial combat system consistent with the game. Since ***Chaosium*** *didn't include such a system in the game, I designed one for my campaign. The system has three major components:*

Dogfighting, Maneuver Class, and Damage.

Dogfight Skill

Dogfighting is a special aspect of piloting. The initial score is (Piloting Skill-20) + DEX. It goes up as do other skills but can never be higher than the piloting skill.

Players with prior dogfight experience, i.e. WWI fighter pilots get a + 5% per 6 months of combat experience.

The skill allows the pilot to attempt one of the following maneuvers: Attack, Evade, Follow.

To find the result, divide each pilot's skill by 5 (round down) and compare the skills on the resistance table to find the percentage chance of success. The opponent may "parry" the maneuver by finding the appropriate number on the resistance table and rolling it to counter the maneuver.

Each pilot may make 1 maneuver and 1 parry per round.

The table below shows the effect of maneuvering.

A pilot must "follow" at least one round to get into position to attack on the next round. Once a pilot has attacked, he can attack each round until his opponent evades.

TABLE ONE: DOGFIGHTING

MANEUVER	PILOT	OPPONENT	RESULT
ATTACK	SUCCEED	SUCCEED	MISS*
ATTACK	SUCCEED	FAIL	CAN ATTACK**
ATTACK	FAIL	SUCCEED	MISS*
ATTACK	FAIL	FAIL	MISS*
EVADE	SUCCEED	SUCCEED	NO CHANGE***
EVADE	SUCCEED	FAIL	OPPONENT CANNOT ATTACK FOR D3 ROUNDS
EVADE	FAIL	SUCCEED	OPPONENT IN POSITION TO ATTACK NEXT ROUND
EVADE	FAIL	FAIL	NO CHANGE***
FOLLOW	SUCCEED	SUCCEED	NO CHANGE***
FOLLOW	SUCCEED	FAIL	CAN ATTACK NEXT ROUND
FOLLOW	FAIL	SUCCEED	CANNOT ATTACK FOR D3 ROUNDS

NOTES: *: A miss still requires that the pilot fire his weapons to determine subsequent ammunition loss and the possibility of jamming.
**: The pilot must still roll to see if the allowed attack is successful.
***: An attack is possible if the planes were already in position to do so before the attempted maneuver.

Maneuver Class

Not all planes are created equal. And so, for game purposes, I group various planes into maneuver classes.

These are:

A: Single engine fighter planes: Military planes specifically designed for dogfighting.

B: Normal single engine planes: Planes with speed and maneuverablility not up to military standards but still able to fight.

C: Fast multi-engine planes: E.g. military bombers/racing planes.

D: Slow multi-engine planes: The slow plodding workhorses of the air.

TABLE TWO: THE EFFECTS OF MANEUVER CLASS ON DOGFIGHT SKILL

CLASS OF PLANE BEING FLOWN:	A	B	C	D
MODIFIER TO PILOT'S DOGFIGHT SKILL:	+ 5%	0	-5%	-10%

Damage

The "hit" and "damage" is rolled against the plane as with any weapon. The plane's skin serves as armor as follows:

TABLE THREE: DAMAGE STOPPED BY A PLANE'S SKIN (ARMOR)

PLANE'S EXTERIOR:	CANVAS/WOOD	THIN METAL	ARMOR PLATE (MILITARY)
HIT POINTS STOPPED:	2	4	6

Each section of the plane can sustain a varying amount of damage. After the amount is exceeded the section becomes unusable and the plane must do without (generally by crashing).

A crash landing uses normal piloting skill modified by terrain landed and part(s) missing (a plane without a propeller can generally glide to a landing; one without a wing has a harder time). Because of the variability of such factors, the keeper will need to make individual determination of the modifier.

Damage Location: The nature of dogfighting -- twists, turns, and dives-- makes it unlikely that the attacker can "call" his shot and let a specific area of the plane (Requires -(25 + D20) % from normal "to hit" roll). Table 4 shows where the attacking shots will hit and the amount of damage each part can sustain.

There you have it. It's not a perfect system, but it fits the spirit of the game and is usable. Sacrifices in realism were made to speed up the system. After all, combat is a minor portion of the game. • SG/FG

TABLE FOUR: HIT LOCATION AND HIT POINTS OF AREAS STRUCK

D%	AREA STRUCK	HIT POINTS	NOTE
01-03	propeller	12(each, if more than 1)	1
04-06	cockpit controls	10	2
07-10	cockpit inhabitants	varies	1
11-30	fuselage(front)	60	
31-55	wings	40(each)	3
56-60	engine	50(each)	1
61-80	fuselage(rear)	80	
81-90	tail flaps	40	2
91-95	landing gear	25(each)	4
96-00	grazing blow	NA	no damage

NOTES:
1: If more than 1, roll appropriate die to determine which is struck.
2: Loss of control modifies PILOT/DOGFIGHT skill by-2D20.
3. Roll D2 for monoplane (1 = Right, 2 = Left) or D4 for biplane (1 = UR; 2 = UL; 3 = LR; 4 = LL)
4. Roll D3 (1 = Front right; 2 = Front Left; 3 = Rear)

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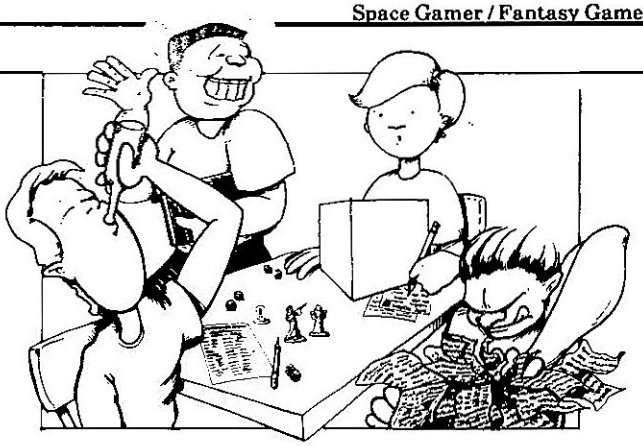
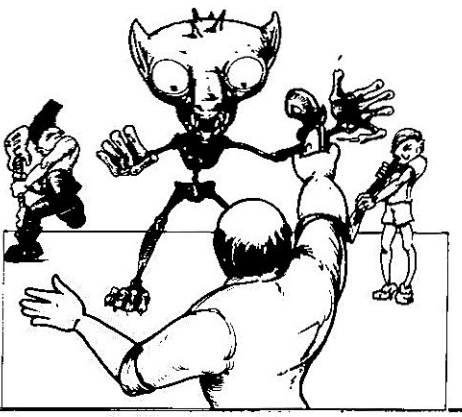
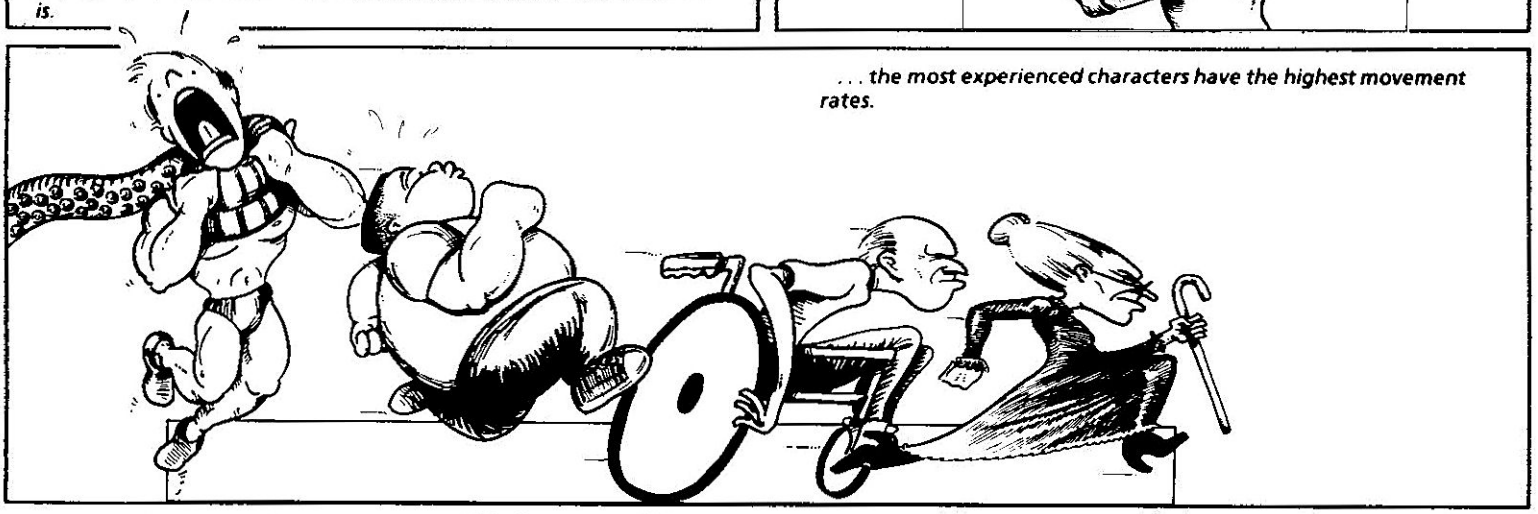


. . . the gamemaster says, "you see a large cave ahead," and the characters respond with, "I think my mother's calling me."

. . . the gamemaster puts a miniature figure of an encounter monster on the table and the players haven't the faintest idea what it is.

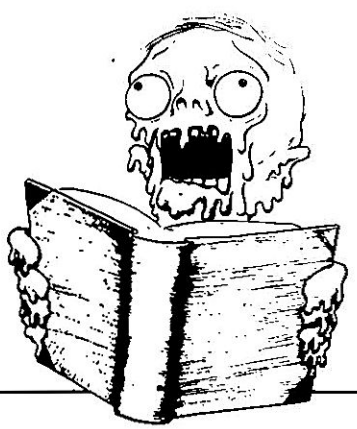
. . . combat skills are the weakest abilities on every character sheet in the party.



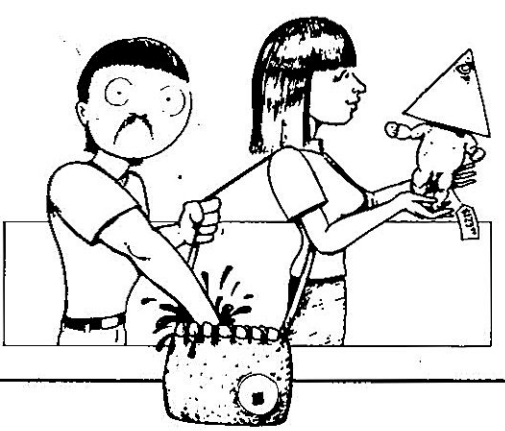


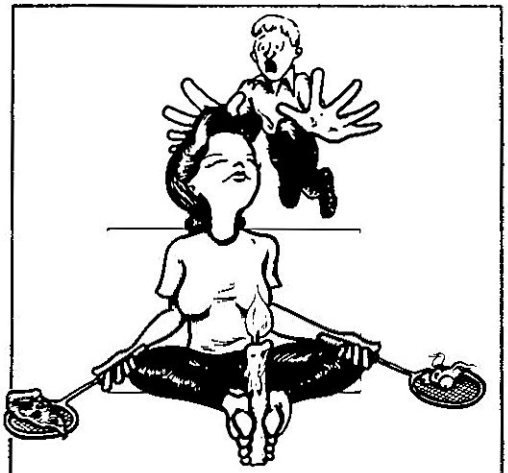
. . . the most experienced characters have the highest movement rates.

. . . the big treasure of the adventure is a musty old book that eliminates your character from the next scenario just by looking at the pictures.



. . . there are no thieves in the party (by profession or otherwise).

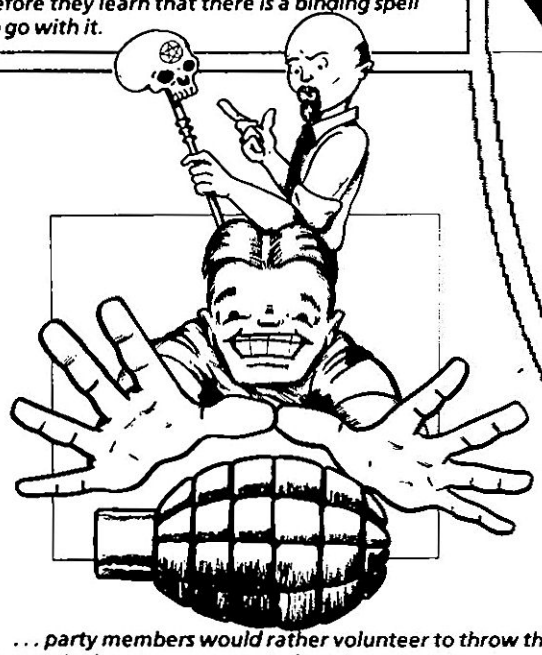




. . . the party summons a Dimensional Shambler before they learn that there is a binding spell to go with it.

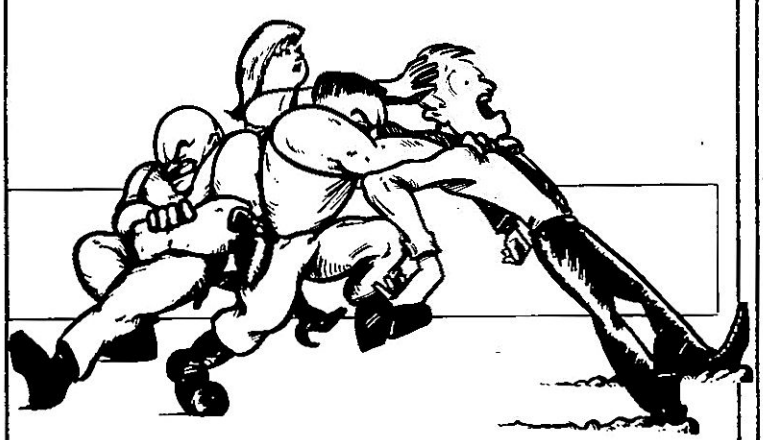
. . . the party learns to cast "Summon Dimensional Shambler" even though they don't know what one is.

. . . the party learns the summoning and binding spells for the Dimensional Shambler, but the caster goes insane after casting the summoning and is too flipped out to control the creature.

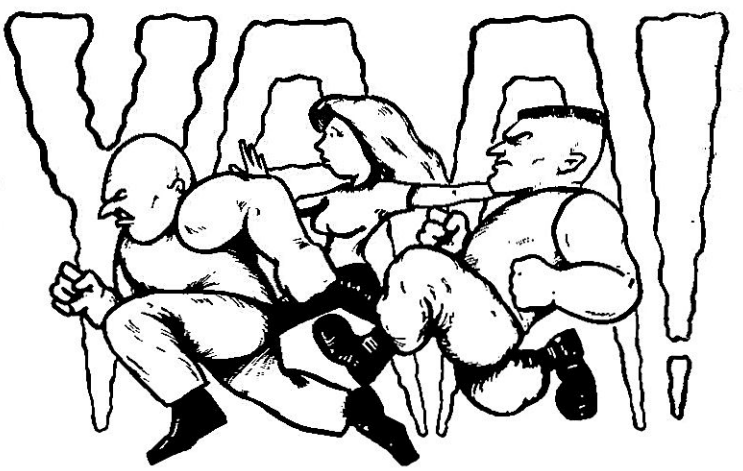


. . . party members would rather volunteer to throw themselves on a grenade than try out a newly-found magic item.

. . . halfway through the scenario, the investigators begin considering changing careers - to grocery clerks or encyclopedia salesmen.



. . . the party sends a scout ahead and waits for the prearranged signal - a scream.



. . . once they hear the signal, they decide that this must be the wrong direction.

Bored Of Castle Life?

By Scott Barbee

After many years of tough adventuring, my player's characters finally scrounged up enough money to build themselves a castle/ stronghold. A castle was their heart's desire, so a castle they all three pitched in to build. Once their dream was a reality, the castle built, and the surrounding land cleared of monsters, I, their DM, ran into a blank wall as to ideas for future adventures. They were all safe in their castles, surrounded by guards and earning a steady income of tax money. If your game is like this, here is a suggestion that might help you out. It did in my campaign. Here's what I did:

I encouraged my players to plot, not against an evil enemy, but against each other. It became very easy for me to introduce many outside events that influenced the game.

In the campaign I am *DM*ing, there are three characters: A magic-user, a thief, and a fighter, all of whom are ninth level. They are all generally neutral. Each one's hope that he would eventually become sole ruler of the sprawling town and castle it surrounded was the necessary ingredient to make this a great game. About two weeks (game time) after the completion of the castle and the surroundings, all three decided to let the fighter be the official "ruler of the town" as long as he cleared everything with the other two. If something debatable came up before the "three kings", they would put it to a vote and the majority ruled.

So far, it seems rather ordinary, but the first thing they voted on was whether or not to let the magic -user build an imposing tower. The vote was negative. The other two thought the magic-user would amass too much power by the attraction of other magic-users and try to overthrow the castle. Instead of letting him build a tower, the other two let him design and build his own mansion within the town. The magic-user is now "importing" some of his friends (all magic-users, of course) under the guise of laborers. The thief is secretly designing and building his own thieves guild and is trying to locate the newly founded assassins guild (run by a NPC).

The fighter has not been playing it straight either. He has designed and is beginning to build up his own secret police with some of his tax money. None of these players know what the other is doing, and it becomes a great intrigue when one of the fighters secret police tries to slip into the thieves guild or vice versa. I, as the DM, have to be careful not to favor any certain person.

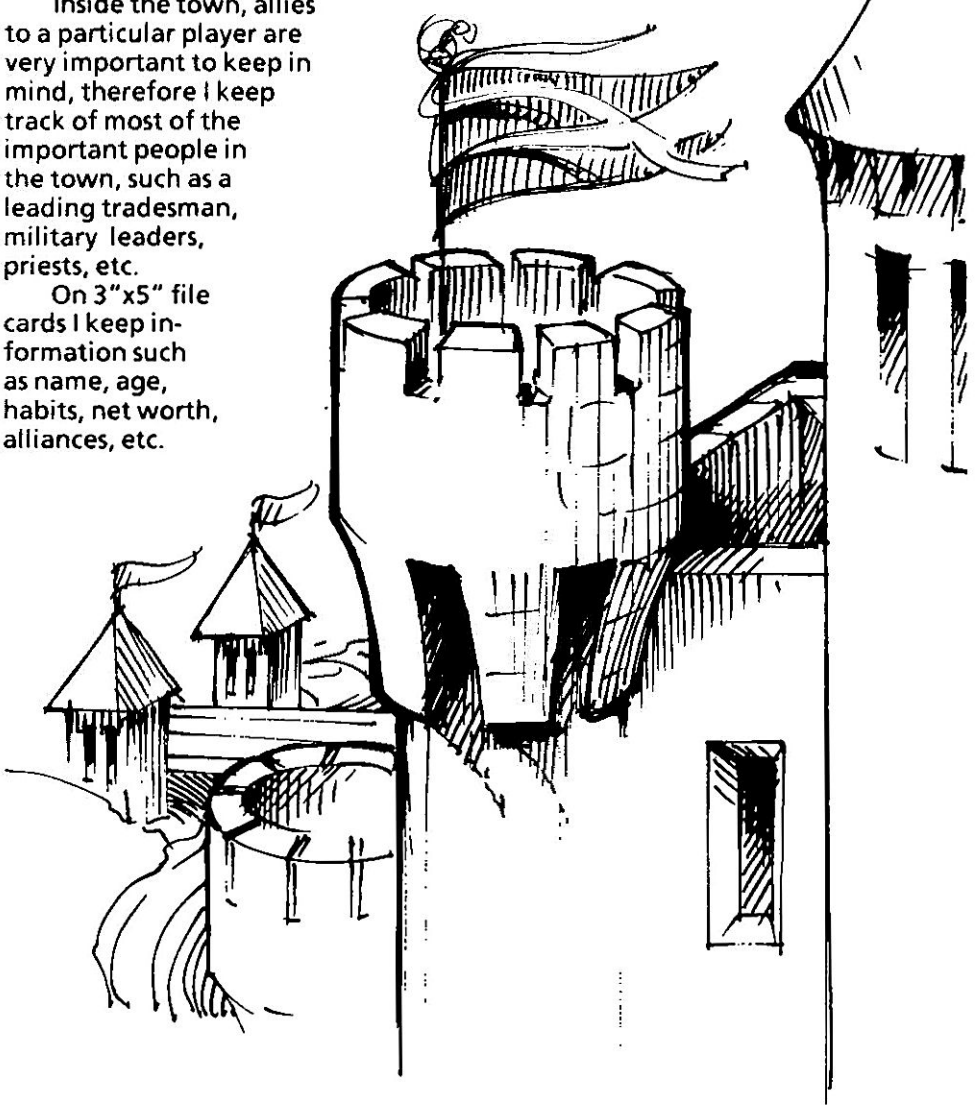
If this does not cause enough excitement, there will be numerous NPC's and adventurers that will begin showing up, looking for work (or loot). These adventurers might be recruited by one of these three rulers of the castle to spy on one of the others, etc. Also, if your campaign still is not exciting enough, there is always someone who is claiming the land that the player built his castle on, right?

Inside the town, allies to a particular player are very important to keep in mind, therefore I keep track of most of the important people in the town, such as a leading tradesman, military leaders, priests, etc.

On 3"x5" file cards I keep information such as name, age, habits, net worth, alliances, etc.

If the players get too competitive, so that you feel some of this plotting should be stopped, I have a contingency plan that will almost force the players to abandon at least some of their devious thoughts and unite, for awhile. For example, in the future an army might arrive at the castle and attempt to take it over. If this happens all three forces might have to band together temporarily, or have their castle taken from them, a situation that will usually unite the squabbling parties.

I wrote this article in the hope that you could learn about what has worked well in my campaign. In turn I hope that you will tell us what has worked well in yours. I just ask one thing of you. *PLEASE,* do not tell my players what I have said. If the fighter finds out that the thief has made a thieves guild, and the magic-user finds out that the fighter is building up a secret police force, then.... • SG/FG



Character Mis-Alignment

By Stephen Fulleman

In this article, we will discuss those two most common, and least understood character alignment: Lawful Stupid and Chaotic Crazy. Although not officially listed in any of the AD&D manuals, these are two of the most common character alignments. The reason for this is the almost universal appeal of the character type, and the ease with which the characters are played.

Lawful stupid is most commonly favored by fighter-types, and the Unearthed Arcana all but requires it for paladins and cavaliers. This alignment is not limited to these classes, however, and does not require a low intelligence score: Your character can have as high an intelligence score as you like, so long as you refrain from using it. The rules are very simple, and easy to follow: Charge every monster blindly, avoiding the use of any tactic more subtle than hitting with the left hand. Never retreat from battle until more than half the party is down (Cavaliers may not retreat even then). Mages will favor brute-force spells like fireball, even in small rooms and narrow corridors, and will charge boldly into combat at the first opportunity.

To recognize a lawful stupid character is to examine both their character sheet and their behavior. Is the "character name" section of the sheet blank? Does the character follow a "code of honor" designed for a short glorious career? Does the character carry several hundred pounds of gold in his or her belt pouch? Does the cleric choose all combat spells, and no healing ones? Does the thief pick his own pocket, for the practice? Does the fighter sleep in full plate armor? If the answer to more than one of these is yes, then you are probably dealing with a lawful stupid. This alignment is a favorite of power-gamers: 75% of the characters above 20th level are lawful stupid!

Chaotic crazy is an alignment popular with mages, thieves, and assassin characters. Characters with high wisdom scores are not barred from this alignment, so long as they do not actually use their wisdom for anything but spell failure percentages and saving throw bonuses. Chaotic crazies are easily distracted, and are known for losing track of where they are, and what they are doing. They will often backstab party members in order to get their wealth or magic items, without worrying about the monster that the person was fighting at the time.

Chaotic crazy thieves often attempt to pick the pockets of city guards, listen at doors while wearing helmets, hide in shadows while moving or being watched, climb walls while carrying wounded party members, backstab people facing them, and pick locks with tools. Assassins of this alignment have occasionally accepted contracts on themselves, when the the price was right.

Mages of this alignment can frequently be seen trying to cast several spells in the same round, carry at least 3 wands (1 of which is a wand of wonder), and often try to use invisibility to sneak up on dragons. They are seldom without at least 5 magic rings (all being worn at the same time, of course), and occasionally throw fireballs into small rooms and narrow corridors, without concern for the back-flash.

Generally, the way to recognize a chaotic crazy is to examine the character sheet: Does it list more weapons than the character can possibly be proficient in? Does the equipment list fill several pages, and include things like marbles and chewing gum, while leaving off food and water? Are the hit points higher than possible for the characters class and level? Are there several artifacts present on the magic list? If the answers to more than two of these are true, then you are probably dealing with a chaotic crazy character.

Of course, this test does not help in any way when dealing with the most fearsome manifestation of this alignment of all: The infamous *Chaotic Crazy DM!* These gain the following powers, usable at will:

- Telepathy with monsters: This is the ability to instantly communicate the strengths and weakness of the party to every monster in the dungeon.

- Monster Summoning 27: This is the ability to summon exactly one more monster than the party can handle, to climates and circumstances where such monster never occur normally.

- Indetectable trap: This is the ability to create traps which are not revealed by find trap spells, and are beyond the ability of any thief to stop and disarm. Such traps usually do one hit point less than the thief has, thus leaving him or her barely alive enough to not find the next indetectable trap.

While technically speaking, all DM's have these powers, they only occur at full force with the chaotic crazy ones.

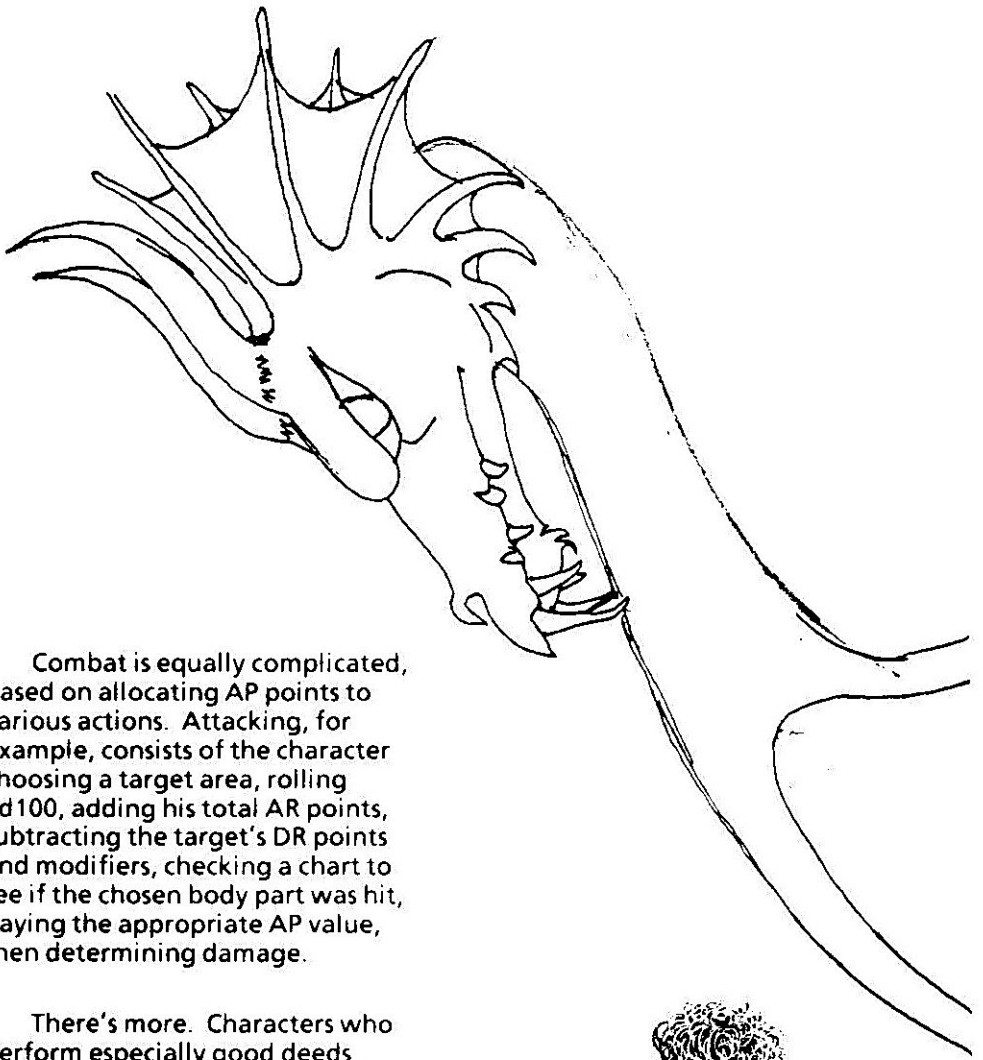
The true beauty of the chaotic crazy alignment is that it does not prevent the character from having some other alignment at the same time (the one actually written on the character sheet, for example). This makes it a very popular alignment, especially with power-gamers, just as lawful stupid is. In fact, 30% of the lawful stupid characters above 25th level are also chaotic crazy, at least part-time.

I think that we can all agree that, while chaotic crazy and/or lawful stupid might not be for everyone, there is a place in the game for them (sword fodder), and they do make the game more interesting for all involved. Just do not take them too seriously, and remember that the object of the game is to have fun! • SG/FG

NOTE: THE AUTHOR IS CHAOTIC CRAZY!

Fantasy Gamer Review

Ysgarth



Published by:
Ragnarok Enterprises

Designed by: **David Nalle**

Complexity level: High
Rules clarity: Good
Graphics quality: Fair
Reviewed by: **Rick Swan**

Ysgarth is a fantasy roleplaying system that is by no means for the novice. I'm not sure it is the *"Revolution in Roleplaying"* it claims to be, but it's certainly one of the most complex systems I've seen in quite a while.

The **Ysgarth** system comprises three deceptively short rulebooks. RoleCraft explains character creation, SpellCraft covers magic, and WorldCraft contains creatures, NPC's, and adventure suggestions. RoleCraft is the heart of the system, detailing basic skills and combat procedures and introducing a few odd concepts unique to the **Ysgarth** design.

Gamers looking for detail will think they've died and gone to heaven with **Ysgarth**. There are 12 primary characteristics. For instance, assigned numerical values from a poll of 120 + 3d10 points. Twenty secondary characteristics are determined from the primaries by involved formulas; the formula for Attack Rating, for instance, is (2 x Intelligence + 2 x Dexterity + Strength + Agility - Size Class)/10. Skills are purchased according to a CST value and may be acquired at increasingly effective levels.

Combat is equally complicated, based on allocating AP points to various actions. Attacking, for example, consists of the character choosing a target area, rolling 1d100, adding his total AR points, subtracting the target's DR points and modifiers, checking a chart to see if the chosen body part was hit, paying the appropriate AP value, then determining damage.

There's more. Characters who perform especially good deeds acquire Karma Points. Bad deeds earn Dharma Points. Renown Points measure a character's fame, while Influence Points keep track of clout. There are also Deity Influence Points which influence a character's god, especially helpful for magic.

The magic system is also complicated, but you get the idea. As an integrated, self-contained fantasy system, **Ysgarth** more closely resembles **Runequest** than **Dungeons and Dragons**, but page for page is much tougher to digest than either one. It's a remarkable game, recommended for advanced players with dependable calculators and a lot of patience●

Role-Playing Mastery

Role-Playing Mastery

by Gary Gygax
Perigree Books
Price: $7.95

Reviewed by:
Christopher Earley

Role-Playing Mastery. That seems to be a rather odious promise, one doomed to failure. And yet, if it can be accomplished, Gary Gygax is among the few persons I would expect it from. Will the reader of this book glean enough information to experience marked improvement in their role-playing approach? I am confident that such will be the case for many. Will the book provide what is needed for its reader to achieve mastery? Alas, I doubt this very much.

The major fault of this book lies in its basic approach. As you may be aware Gary Gygax and **TSR Inc.**, makers of the **Advanced Dungeons & Dragons** game, have had a falling out. Gary's **New Infinities Inc.** has developed a line of generic role-playing supplements which will be their bread and butter until their own game systems and other products gain a following of their own. Though **New Infinities** is not associated with the publishers of this book, Gary Gygax has also gone for the generic approach to this project. As such, the work falls prey to pages of generalized rules and sketchy suggestions for improving play which are far from satisfying.

This is not to say that the work is to be dismissed as without value. In fact, each chapter seems to be headed in a sound and relevant direction. This however, serves only to increase the frustration of the serious reader who feels that the text brushes over subjects, moving to a different topic just at the point where an in-depth examination of the previous facet of the subject is in order. Gygax is not unaware of just what he does and does not present; he mentions more than once that, from the point he has taken the reader, the reader must then examine the individual game system that he or she wishes to master. There is no doubt in the reader's mind that Gary Gygax knows precisely what is needed to master the various role-playing systems. And this knowledge lies just out of reach, buried beneath universal advice and general rules.

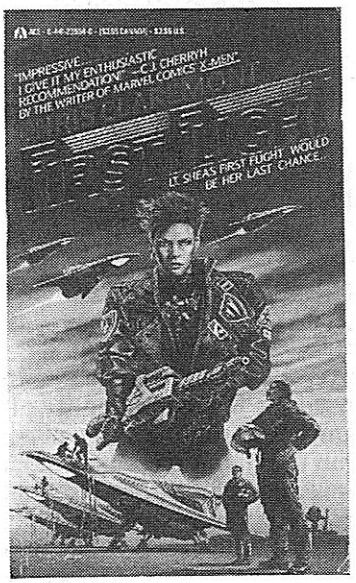
Had Gygax examined a single game system (and I think the reader should know just which system I had in mind) and offered a detailed, individualized treatment of that specific game, this work would have have been much more useful to the players of that system. As it stands, this book serves a greater number of people to a lesser degree. Though this created a larger market for the work, it left that market less satisfied than would the single-game book wished for.

There came a point in my reading of **Role-Playing Mastery** that I realized what I was not going to get. In order to retain a critical perspective, I then concentrated upon what I did get. Considered thusly, **Role-Playing Mastery** is a treatise on the philosophy and mindset behind the ever-growing field of role-playing. The goal of players, gamemasters and game designers was presented as seen by the premier catalyst of the entire "movement". A universal system of tactics, strategies and procedures of play was presented and the mechanics of game system construction was discussed. Gygax stressed the level and quality of commitment required to truly excel within the gaming community, and gave readers the essential "feel" of role-gaming. As usual, Gygax's thoughts are lucid and logical and the reader benefits from this exposure to the Gygax Precepts.

In summary, **Role-Playing Mastery** is solid so far as it goes. Therein lies the problem: It does not, due to its generic nature, go far enough. Had this book been called "Role-Playing Improvement", or "Getting A Better Feel For Role-Playing", perhaps I would not have been as frustrated and disappointed as I was. Gygax offered general advice which, to me, was common sense and presented guidelines to which I already adhered. Despite this, I cannot consider myself a role-playing master. What I possess is "the feel" for gaming as a whole and moderate skill in my particular gaming system. If you the reader would place yourself in a similar or higher category, I cannot recommend this book. If, however, you are new to the community of role-playing and would like to better grasp both the general concept of role-playing and the skills required to play, ***Role-Playing Mastery*** is a worthwhile and recommended reading, written by the (undeniably) biggest name in the role-playing community. • SG/FG

Book Reviews
by Lynn Bryant

First Flight
by Chris Claremont
Ace SF


"IMPRESSIVE. I GIVE IT MY ENTHUSIASTIC RECOMMENDATION" —CHRIS CLAREMONT BY THE WRITER OF MARVEL COMICS' X-MEN!
IT SHE'S FIRST FLIGHT WOULD BE HER LAST CHANCE...

Let's begin by saying **First Flight** is a well paced, fast moving adventure that is tempered with some good characterizations and a bit of mystery. Beyond this there are a number of other good reasons to read this book.

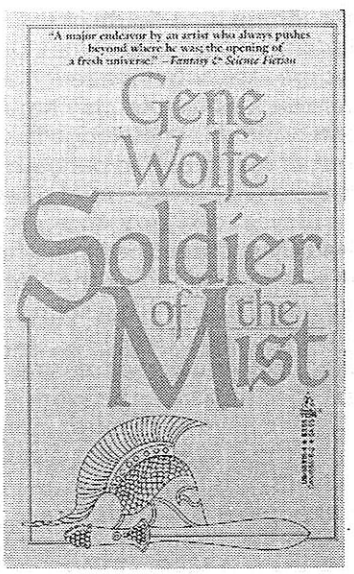
The identity of the author is one. For those of you who never, ever looked at a comic book Chris Claremont is generally regarded as one of the top talents in the field. He has been writing the **X-men** for over 12 years.

There is always the concern that when a talent in one genre translates to another his major field will have too much influence on his writing. Happily it appears that Chris has managed to bring with him the best of comic adventures, such as suspense and good dialogue, without any of the obvious pitfalls. **First Flight** does not read like a written out comic. It reads as a well crafted novel. (Others seem to agree as it was nominated for the prestigious Nebula award.)

Another reason to read **First Flight** was the strength of the characterizations. Surprisingly Chris chose a female heroine. This works and he avoids some of the more trite female cliches that have begun to mar even the works of Science Fiction's top talents. You actually find yourself more aware of Lt. Nicole Shea as a person who is a naval officer and not only as a woman (which she most definitely is).

The book is set in the near future where space is still a frontier. Among other entertaining concepts, Chris points out that in space the most valuable thing any ship will be carrying is itself. The suspense builds beautifully as disaster follows crisis, all tightly knit together. The situation and science are readily gameable by most SF game systems. Perhaps if would suffice to say that the heroine is assured by her superiors that this is to be "only a routine mission".

Soldier of the Mist
by Gene Wolfe
TOR Books


"A major endeavor by an artist who always pushes beyond where he was the opening of a fresh universe." —Fantasy & Science Fiction
Gene Wolfe
Soldier of the Mist

Some fantasy novels work because of imagination. Others because of the fascination of the world they are set in, yet others gain popularity by portraying vivid characters. **Soldier of the Mist** has all of these and more. Perhaps one of **Gene Wolfe's best novels**, this book tells the story of a Greek soldier and is set during the Mycean age. This is the same period as were written about in the **Illiad** and **Odyssey**. But where those classics are sweeping tales of cities and kingdoms, Soldier is the personal tale of one very special man.

The hero has a rare form of amnesia which causes him to forget virtually everything each time he sleeps. This causes him to be the favorite instrument of the gods and elemental powers. It also gives him a unique perspective on one of history's least understood and most fascinating eras. The era when heroes really did live and maybe the gods were a bit less subtle, or at least more believed in.

The writing style is unique. The adventures both historically sound (and they "feel" right for Mycean Greece as well) and gives us insights into the culture that evolved to become our own. The soldier's world is filled with three dimensional characters with motives and personalities of their own. This is a truly unique book which you will either enjoy immensely or dislike almost as strongly. Like many of life's wonders it is one you should try.

Take Off and Take Off Top
by Randall Garrett
Starblaze Press

Have you ever wished some of the greatest Science Fiction novels were longer or had a sequel? Ever wondered if anyone could write about the Gray Lensman with a straight face? The **Take Off** books are collections of short stories (and some not too short ones) plus articles by Randall Garrett. The author is best known for his Lord Darcy alternate earth/detective novels.

The stories covered in the two volumes include parodies, such as "Backstage Lensman" and pastiches (stories written in the same style as another writer). There is a Lovecraftian story which the master himself would have claimed. There are also a number of unpublished stories and other works by Garrett, many of which reflect his extraordinary sense of humor and remind us he was one of the men who led the way with humorous SF.

Finally, there really is one reason to read a book: because you will *enjoy* reading it. By this standard both of these are *must reads*. They provide an entertaining

chance to enjoy some more works of a writer whose works are beginning to gain well deserved recognition as classics.

Camelot 3000 By Mike Barr and Brian Holland DC Comics

This graphic novel is an impressive blend of a punk future (you can tell the artist at least visits New York) and the Authurian legend. Aliens from a planet which has appeared at the edge of the solar system are successfully invading the earth. Our hero, fleeing them, stumbles into a new archeological dig and opens the tomb of King Arthur. The king emerges and takes out the three (literally) little green things. (Well, he is supposed to appear when England needs him. I suppose being invaded qualifies.) Arthur and his new friend have to find the reincarnations of his Knights. Along the way he finds Guineviere and Lancelot, who still can't control his hormones. Merlin and the rest of the mythos are involved and the climax comes on the new planet.

The art and the mix of high tech and medieval techs are good. The original **Camelot 3000** story seem disjointed when I first read it in monthly comics. The longer graphic novel format serves it quite well. As to gaming? The potential to mix the new **Traveller** or **Star Wars** systems with **AD&D** is almost irresistible. The visual aides are spectacular.

Planet in Peril and Chase into Space by Kim Mohan and Pam O'Neal ACE SF (New Infinity)

Often we see games which are based upon novels. Here we have the case of two books which are based upon a game. The game is Gary Gygax's newest role playing game, **Cyborg Commando**. You may have recognized the name of the first author. Kim was editor of the Dragon for almost a decade. He left to work with Gary Gygax at **New Infinities** and, evidently do some writing himself.

The premise of both the books and the game is that Earth has been invaded. Rather than destroy the resources they wish to pillage, the aliens employ half mechanical, half animal robots to selectively eliminate the opposition, all of mankind. This takes them way down to a personal level. Unfortunately, Earth has nearly lost when the first book begins. To counter the alien con-structs, man has to fall back on an experimental program of cyborg warriors.

There is an almost automatic reaction to anything which is based upon a game that the book will be a poorly written exploitation. Some are, a surprising number aren't. Among these are the Keith novels based upon FASA's Battletech games. They prove to be tightly written, well plotted, full of action, and just plain good reading. You get insight into what it is like to lose most of your body to mechanical substitutes and then have to fight a failing war. There is also a good sense of the outrage all the race will feel at being invaded. Even if you never look at the game, you'll enjoy the books. They are quite gameable in the Cyborg Commando system. As good as these are this reviewer is tempted to see if the game has the same high standards.

Hammer's Slammers by David Drake Baen Books

Whenever I have the privilege of writing this column I am going to include one classic book that is extremely suitable for gaming. The first of these will be David Drake's Futuristic armored warfare series, **Hammer's Slammers**.

The Slammers are a force of mercenaries who have managed to equip themselves with atomic powered tanks that fire plasma cannons. So equipped, they have become the elite of all intersteller mercenary regiments. Each of the books in the series contain the story of what happens on one or more of their contracts.

The universe they operate in is one where mankind has spread to thousands of planets over hundreds of years. Some of these are not nice places. Beside military concerns, the Slammers always seem to get involved in ethical questions. All in all there is a gritty feel to these novels that make you feel they show how life really would be if there ever are interstellar mercenaries. These are not nice guys. A few of the Slammers are borderline psychopaths. Most are professionals whose job happens to be winning battles.

Mayfair Games has already produced a boardgame based upon the Slammers and recently a **Combat Command** choosen path gamebook was released by **Ace SF** entitled **Slammers Down**.

Dave Drake, having been trained as an administrator was, of course, immediately assigned as a tank commander in Viet Nam. Drawing on his own experiences and one of the best private military libraries in science fiction, he has produced several volumes of hard edged military fiction. The last volume released was At Any Price. Another volume is expected to be out in the fall. For anyone interested in either Science Fiction or armored warfare, this series is a must. • SG/FG

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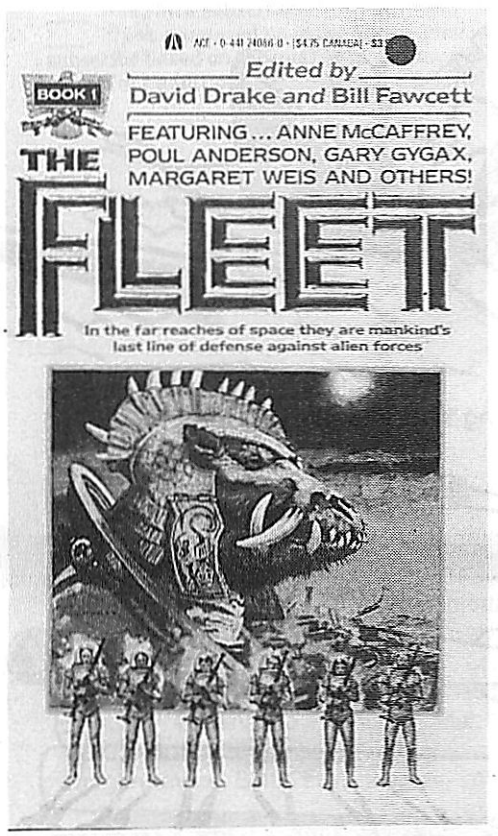
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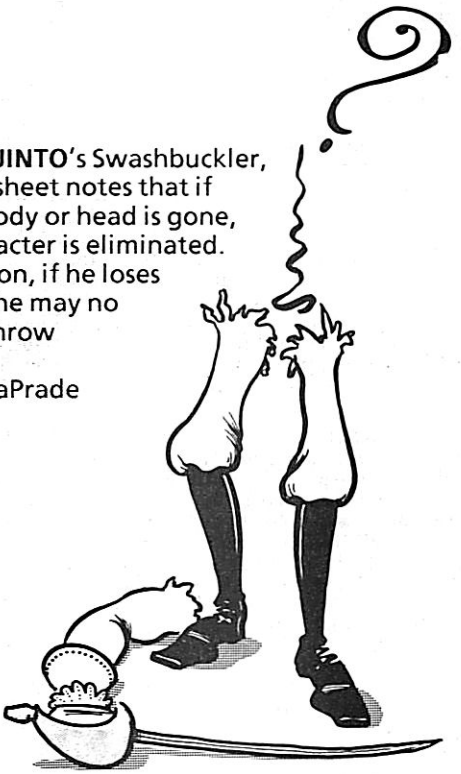

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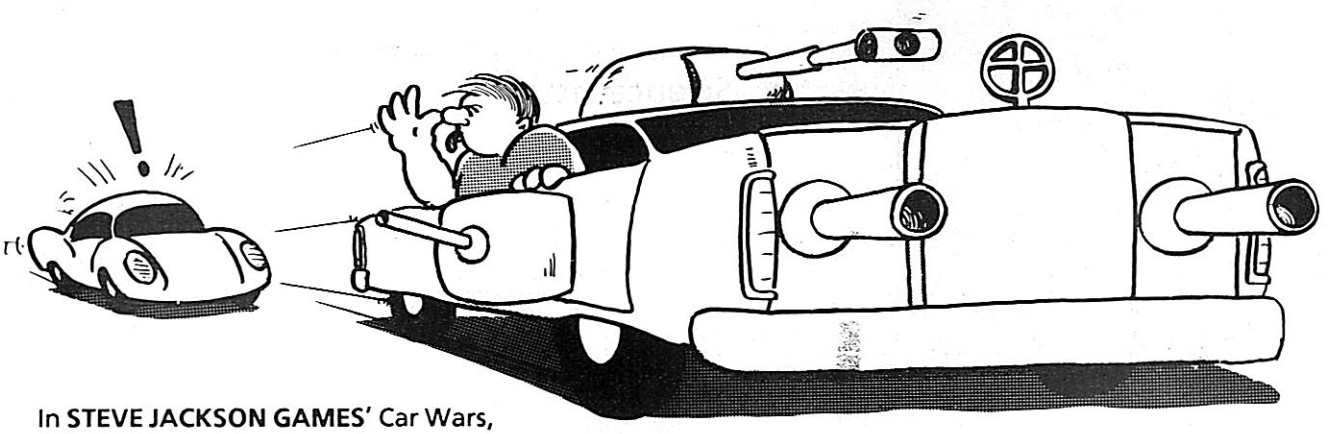

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